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Constructing White Texas Maleness: From the Texas Centennial of 1936 to
the Aftermath of President John F. Kennedy's Assassination in 1963

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A thesis submitted to the University of London in candidacy for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy from the Department of History, University College
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Abstract

This thesis demonstrates how the popular image of white Texas masculinity was constructed and used for political purposes in the period between the Texas Centennial in 1936 and the assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas, in 1963.

The image of white Texas maleness was reconstructed in the 1930s by a group of Texas writers/academics led by J. Frank Dobie, J. Evetts Haley and Walter Prescott Webb. Their version of Texas male mythology gave a degree of intellectual credence to the stereotyped version of Texas manhood, which was founded on the problems and exploits of strong and confident individualistic men and their attempts to maintain or to wrest power. This manner of Texas maleness had its root in the mix of truth and mythology which popularly represented nineteenth century Texas history. These writers were profoundly influenced by the political environment of their time and their perspective on Texas maleness reflected this.

Other writers, most notably Edward Anderson and Nelson Algren, with an equally distinct but separate political agenda, challenged the basis of the white Texas male's iconic status and offered a radically different view of Texas manhood. Therefore, two ideologically distinct versions of white Texas maleness, one based on those with societal power and influence, and the other based on those without, were created.

The societal import of the concept of white Texas maleness was reflected in the attitude of the state's press and the adoption of the stereotypical image by those in Texas who wielded socio-economic and political power. Central to the thesis is how conflicting arms of the Texas press, liberal and conservative, saw and addressed the image of the state's men.

The thesis will also discuss how the obvious political potential of the stereotyped image was employed in film and literature during politically sensitive periods in American history. For example, the image of white Texas maleness in film and literature deteriorated in the aftermath of the Kennedy killing and the subsequent Presidency of the Texan, Lyndon Johnson, when many writers and film-makers saw Texas and its manhood as representing all that they believed to be wrong with American society.

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Introduction

Bush and the image of Texas maleness¹

The current President of the United States, George W. Bush, was raised in Texas and that knowledge brings with it an immediate and definite perception of his character. It is difficult to find an analysis of Bush that does not in some way attribute his demeanour and actions to his home state. Social commentators, cartoonists and journalists regularly use a variety of cowboy metaphors and images to describe Bush. He himself recognises the benefits of a Texas male persona and exploits it at every opportunity. At the Republican National Convention at New York in September 2004, for instance, Bush said that: ‘Some folks look at me and see a certain swagger, which in Texas is called “walking”’.² This allusion to the idea that the men of Texas carry themselves with a confident, no-nonsense deportment struck a chord with his elite, powerful and predominantly white Republican audience, who perhaps saw in his Texas swagger a notion that was close to their vision of the American male ideal. The sentiment behind the Bush statement and its natural appeal to a constituency which has traditionally represented socio-economic privilege in America are central to this thesis.

The thesis itself proposes to demonstrate the significance of this essential but as yet unrecognised portrayal of provincial American manhood and show how it has been widely used and moulded by those in film, literature and society who wished to promote their own political or social agendas or, indeed, challenge what they perceived as the existing socio-political norm. The chronology of the thesis runs broadly from the Texas Centennial in 1936 to the aftermath of the assassination of

President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas, in 1963, and the subsequent Presidency of Texan Lyndon Johnson. This period represented a time in Texas history when the masculine image of Texas was most obviously employed by those in the state who recognised its potential as a political tool. Essentially, the thesis will show how Texas writers constructed the idea of masculinity in a Texas context and how cultural commentators and critics in Texas responded to the image of white Texas men offered in film and literature. It will also endeavour to establish that the key image-makers in Texas were greatly concerned with the image of Texas maleness and understood its societal impact. It will emphasise that they were considerably influenced by the need to construct an image of white Texas masculinity that accorded with their personal, politically-influenced perspective on the world. In the same way, the thesis will show that cultural commentators and critics in Texas, specifically those who worked for the state's press, responded to the standard image of white Texas maleness in line with the demands that contemporary politics and socio-economic pressures placed on them.

Both Bush and his audience understood that the men of the state lie at the heart of Texas mythology, and the series of male-based myths which emanated from Texas came gradually from the 1930s to be the property of those in the state who were politically conservative. Rightist politicians such as Beauford Jester, Coke Stevenson, Lee O'Daniel and Allan Shivers all, at one time or another, employed the symbols of the male-dominated Texas past in an attempt to gain political advantage.³ It was not simply the behaviour of opportunist politicians that marked the hold of Texas conservatism over the male culture of the state, however. Roland Barthes' assertion that 'myth is on the right' was nowhere more apparent than in the context of Texas conservative society and how it viewed maleness. Barthes continued: 'There, it is essential . . . it invents itself ceaselessly. It takes hold of everything, all aspects of the

law, of morality, of aesthetics, of diplomacy, of household equipment, of Literature, of entertainment.’⁴ Ronnie Dugger, the founding editor of the *Texas Observer*, has similarly argued: ‘The Texas macho image is basal to the conservative cause in Texas politics . . . the Texas macho stuff, while originating from many cultural sources, is marrow for the bone of right-wing politics.’⁵

One manifestation of this capture of the image of Texas maleness by the right is that over the period covered in this thesis Texas came to represent the home of American right-wing extremism. According to Eric F. Goldman, in the wake of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas, in November 1963, it was perceived by Americans from outside the state as ‘an outsized collection of boasters, boosters, millionaire ignoramuses, violence worshippers and fanatic right-wing enemies of the United Nations, social security, free lunches for poor children and other decencies.’⁶ Goldman’s overtly negative assessment of how Texas was perceived was, at its core, a recognition of the impact of the politicisation of the state’s image.

The Historical Basis of the Image of White Texas Men

Versions of white Texas maleness, in a variety of recognisable forms – frontiersmen, oilmen, ranchers, soldiers, cowboys, lawmen and businessmen – have been used to personify a certain type of American manhood. These images of Texas men function as a cogent reminder of the nation’s past and also as an exemplar for contemporary struggles. The association of Texas maleness with war is a good example. At the present moment, a Texas-born president is once again leading America in a time of war. George W. Bush, like his Texas-associated predecessors in

the White House, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Lyndon B. Johnson and George Bush, Sr., is continuing this connection. The linking of Texas masculinity with warfare is, however, not confined to politicians. The American military itself has traditionally leaned heavily on Texas manhood when war erupts. The Texas politician Sam Rayburn said of the number of Texans in the army during World War II that: 'The real reason Congress passed selective service was to get someone in the army not a Texan.'⁷ During that war, there was no shortage of Texans available for heroic status. As well as Eisenhower, who led the Allied armies to victory in Europe, Chester Nimitz, who controlled the U.S. fleet in the Pacific, and Ira Eaker, who led the U. S. Eighth Air Force as it devastated the towns and cities of Nazi Germany, helped to confirm the association of Texas with patriotic action in the eyes of America. A Texas backwoods sharecropper named Audie Murphy lied about his age to enlist, then won more decorations than any other American soldier. Sam Dealey, yet another Texan, was the Navy's most decorated man. A disproportionate number of Texans fought and died in the Second World War. Texas represented 5% of the American population but 7% of the armed forces were Texans, while a figure of more than 7% of the Americans killed in action were Texans.⁸ In the recent Afghan conflict, the first American soldier killed in ground combat was Nathan Chapman, from San Antonio, Texas.⁹

The idea of the state of Texas being associated with American male endeavour originated in the circumstances surrounding the state's inception and development. The Siege of the Alamo in 1836 initially became a rallying point for the notion of Texas independence and subsequently a wider symbol of American resolve and sacrifice. The popular image of the men involved in that struggle, Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, William Barrett Travis and Sam Houston, is prominent in the annals of

American heroism. Following this, the struggle of white Texas manhood to assume control over the frontier produced some of the most potent male images in American culture.

Of course, the white Texas male is not alone among groupings of American men in being the focus of popular examination. However, no other section of American manhood, whether Italian-Americans, Southern rednecks or Black youth, has a focus that aligns it directly with the idea of America itself. It is, of course, the very association of the Texas male icon with American patriotic values that makes the concept a suitable target when those with an alternative agenda wish to offer broad socio-political criticism in film and literature.

A Cultural Downturn in the Image of White Texas Men

All manner of societal criticism or, alternatively, flag-waving was and continues to be channelled through the figure of the white Texas male. Such status makes the concept of Texas masculinity unique in American cultural terms. Ultimately, the prominence of the icon was followed by its fall from grace. When those whom the image served best were in the ascendancy, and in a position to influence the nature of the cultural output, or when America looked for reassurance to its cultural icons in times of crisis, the idea thrived. However, when the cultural agenda changed, and writers and film-makers started to look closely and critically at the things that represented the nation's reactionary past or the status quo, Texas and its manhood were systematically deconstructed. The process started quietly, with mild parody and gentle criticism. By the 1950s, however, in films such as Douglas Sirk's *Written on the Wind* (1956), George Stevens' *Giant* (1956) or Vincente Minelli's *Home From the*

Hill (1960), Texas men, and the society they had created, were at the forefront of the widespread cinematic critiques of American patriarchal and bourgeois values. The process of debunking what critical film-makers and writers saw as the myth surrounding Texas masculinity continued unchecked from around the early 1960s. Indeed, after John Wayne's homage to Texas courage in *The Alamo* (1960), it is difficult to cite a film that presents the idea of Texas maleness in a favourable light.

As significant in the construction of the image of Texas manhood was the influence of the Texas political system. The thesis will, therefore, take into account the intrusion at times of those members of the Texas power elite, politicians, businessmen and university regents, into the work of those academics, film-makers, journalistic critics and writers who were influential or concerned with the construction of the image of white Texas men. For some film-makers and writers, Texas became the dark underbelly of American society, the ideal setting in which to expose the perceived faults in the range of historical and cultural myths that surrounded American men. In the process, all classes of Texas manhood, from the super-rich oilman to the West Texas dishwasher, were subjected to negative literary and cinematic characterisation.

Masculinity and Whiteness

The terminology used to describe the various racial and ethnic groups in Texas is fraught with the potential for controversy and inaccuracy. The common term used to describe the white inhabitants of Texas, that is those from European stock, is Anglo. This, of course, excludes the considerable German, Czech, Scottish, Irish, French and Scandinavian influences on the state. The difficulties facing those who have attempted

to broaden the base of this terminology are clear. For instance, not quite so exclusive, but similarly inaccurate, is the term Anglo-Celt, used by historian T. R. Fehrenbach in his book, *Lone Star* (1968). Fehrenbach dedicated a chapter to the early white settlers in Texas and gave priority to the ethnic mix of Lowland Scots and English (hence 'Anglo-Celt') who made their way west across the Southern states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁰ Fehrenbach's choice was an example of a move away from one inaccuracy to another. Therefore, conscious of the dangers in any terminology and anxious to be as accurate as possible, it has been decided in this thesis to employ the simple term 'white' when describing those Texans whose ethnic background is North American European. Given that the main thrust of this work deals with *white* manhood, the differences between the non-white categories in Texas is less crucial. However, where relevant, the terms Tejano, to describe Texans of Mexican stock whose presence in the state pre-dated the revolution of 1836, or Mexican, for those from that country who came after, will be used. The African American population of Texas will be termed 'Black'.

The reasons for this sensitivity with regard to racial categorisation are based on the brutally divisive realities of Texas history. This thesis is founded on the idea that the male-constructed, historically-based mythology that sprang from the Alamo, the frontier, the cattle trails, the Indian wars and the gunfights of nineteenth-century Texas was presented to the world as an intensely and exclusively white masculine construction. When the state of Texas felt the need to promote itself during its centennial decade of the 1930s, it was this imposing image of white maleness that was offered, predominantly by a white male literary establishment with a definite socio-political agenda, as best representing the state's vigour and strength. Those writers who challenged the stature of the dominant white Texas male icon did so, in the main,

from the viewpoint of a lower class of white Texan. All of this, of course, ignored the considerable presence in Texas of racial others who were outside of the dominant white racial grouping. Therefore, in order to gain a fuller understanding of this white male dominance of Texas culture it is important that work done on the new academic growth areas of whiteness and masculinity is acknowledged.

Few of the works in these areas are Texas-specific, however.¹¹ Of particular relevance and import, consequently, is Neil Foley's *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks and Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (1997). Foley emphasises the importance of how masculinity is perceived and then employed for political purposes in a Texas social context. His work is especially significant here because it gives insight into the political intent behind the reconstruction of maleness, both white and non-white, in such a racially-sensitive social climate. Foley contends that whiteness existed in Texas in degrees. Poor whites served to remind their socio-economically prosperous white cousins of the fragility of racial construction and, therefore, whiteness had to be graded in order that economic success was suitably rewarded.¹² As this thesis will discuss, the contrast between different classes of white Texans has also been used in film and literature. In this context its purpose was, for the most part, to illustrate the benefits of upward social movement by disparaging those fated to live with the difficulties of socio-economic inequity.

~~The use of~~ stereotyped male figures in American culture has often been used to determine a negative – what something is not, as opposed to what it is. For example, the concept of the poor Southern white male in all of his guises – cracker, redneck, hillbilly, peckerwood – has been employed by both black and white society to make a distinction between themselves and the lowest social common denominator.¹³ The dominant Texas male icon was expected to be brave, honourable, dignified and

heroic. This kind of prejudice impacted on the figure of the powerless white Texas male, allowing representations of him in cinema and literature, especially in the period prior to 1963, to be demeaning and consistently inadequate.

The work of David Roediger – although, unlike Foley, not specific to Texas – in relation to whiteness is also important.¹⁴ Roediger's identification and understanding of whiteness in a class context is of particular relevance to the notion of separating two different constructions of manhood on socio-economic lines. The insights of Foley and Roediger, in combination, lend credence to the contention of this thesis that the image of Texas masculinity was recreated during the 1930s, not simply in terms of race but also in terms of class. Both deal with the primacy of whiteness and Foley quotes Roediger's observation on the use of racial comparison in the construction of white identity, which according to both was an 'empty and terrifying attempt to build an identity based on what one isn't and on whom one can hold back.'¹⁵ This point is crucial if an understanding of the motivating forces of those who set out to build an image that would confirm the strength of the white race in Texas is to be attained.

Michael Kimmel in his book, *Manhood in America* (1996), also believed that men defined themselves by excluding others from the notion of manhood. He wrote that: 'American men define their masculinity, not as much in relation to women, but in relation to each other.' Therefore, Kimmel's concept of the 'Self-Made Man' was that of an individual who measured his maleness against the lesser masculinity of supposed racial and economic inferiors. This manner of male definition was particularly relevant in a Texas context where it was evident that, as Kimmel himself believed, 'manhood had to be proved.'¹⁶ Some sections of white Texas male society proved themselves by becoming rich, but for some that was not enough. Many economically-successful Texas 'Self-Made Men' sought to confirm their maleness by

adopting the trappings of the most unambiguous version of manhood, that of the cowboy/rancher. There, in that guise, they believed, their sense of themselves as Texans and as men was unlikely to be questioned. This was, of course, true, but only in the social and cultural climate which prevailed in Texas prior to the 1960s.

The social studies of masculinity in the context of Western films and books are also useful. The claim of Texas on the mythology of that region makes studies such as Jane Tompkins' *West of Everything* (1992) relevant to any examination of Texas maleness. Tompkins points to the rise during the 1920s and '30s of the kind of uncompromising masculinity that marked the predominant image of Texas men in the first part of the twentieth century. The emergence of this kind of maleness in Western film and literature was due, she argues, to a crisis in masculinity prompted by the influence of women in late nineteenth-century America. Men felt threatened by this alleged feminine dominance and the creation of the Western myth arose as a reassertion of male values.¹⁷

Rupert Wilkinson, in his book *American Tough* (1984), argues that it was American awareness that the tough masculinity of the Western hero could disappear that prompted his continual rejuvenation. The West was seen to offer a male culture that the industrial East could not match and this continually breathed life into the myth. Wilkinson's work is, therefore, relevant because the fear of losing the unambiguous maleness associated with the traditional view of white Texas manhood was certainly a factor for those who were concerned with the image of Texas men.¹⁸

Steven Cohan's book *Masked Men* (1997) informs the thesis in a number of ways.¹⁹ Cohan shows, for instance, that, in film of the 1950s, clothing is an important aspect of masculine performance. This is, of course, an important point to carry into any analysis of Texas-based films. As the thesis will show, the men of Texas in the

1950s were increasingly defined by their apparel. However, this theme can also be adapted and extended to embrace Texas-based literature of the 1930s, in which male appearance proves to be such a crucial factor in the definition of white Texas manhood. Also informative is Cohan's assessment of the work of Montgomery Clift and James Dean, both of whom added to the range of the cinematic image of white Texas maleness in the 1940s and 1950s. Cohan argues that both actors are usually read as 'boys', a notion which, if true, makes the adult maleness of their opposites much more conventional and easily recognisable as stereotypical Texans. He writes:

In nineteenth-century Western society the cattlemen and the cowboy were just what their names designated: a man and a boy occupying vastly different economic positions within a ranch's class structure.”²⁰

Cohan's point here lends credence to the idea that there was a definite and significant social strata contained within the concept of white Texas maleness. Such views, and others seeking to explain the significance of masculinity and whiteness in American society and popular culture, underpin this thesis.²¹

Two Constructions of White Texas Maleness

The thesis will also emphasise that there was a profound ideological split in the cultural presentation of masculine Texas culture. Two key versions of white Texas manhood were constructed by Texas writers in the 1930s and each of these had their roots in history. From the state's violent inception in the 1830s, but especially in the years of the nineteenth century following the Civil War, two separate areas of struggle

took place in white Texas society. The first concerned the winning and securing of the frontier and the second centred on who would have economic control of the state. The former conflict ensured the supremacy of the white race in all areas of Texas society. The second, however, caused a lasting class-based schism among white Texans.²² In both struggles, a powerful version of white Texas manhood emerged triumphant. The kind of white Texas masculinity that emerged from the years of agrarian radicalism in the latter third of the nineteenth-century was ultimately powerless against the economic strength of its opponents in the Democratic Party and their friends among the business community and landowners. White Texas maleness of this kind was thereafter in the shadow of those who, myth would have it, forged Texas economics and politics in a manner that recalled the spirit of the frontier. The division between those with power and those without was reflected in how the image of white Texas maleness was portrayed in literature and film throughout the period covered by this thesis.

The Powerful

The conflict which determined Texas independence, the frontier struggle and the mythology that accompanied both has been easily adapted over the years into literature and film. The concept of white Texas manhood involved in the fight to make the frontier safe for white civilisation was embraced by both mediums and, as a result, moved remorselessly into the American national consciousness. Film-makers and writers have consistently used these images as an affirmation of the values of America and of the courage of American manhood.

This version of Texas masculinity was nurtured by those in the state who saw in

the rugged individualism that lay at the heart of the frontier struggle a model that fitted easily with their social and economic agenda. It came, therefore, to represent the dominant cultural viewpoint and was mirrored in the fundamentally conservative and reactionary demeanour of the state's overtly masculine political and business cultures. Power, or the desire for it, was essential if this version of white Texas masculinity was to be complete.

A good example of how the acquisition of power altered the persona of a prominent Texan is to be found in the figure of Lyndon Baines Johnson, the Texas-born President. Johnson was born into a Hill Country family in 1908. The personal and political stance that saw him first elected to Congress as a New Dealer in the 1930s was broadly neo-Populist, mirroring the resentments and bitterness that poor Texans felt toward big business and corporate America. His personal appearance mirrored his own background and that of his constituents and sent out a message that emphasised a shared experience. By the time Johnson arrived in the White House in 1963, his appearance and demeanour had changed. Johnson was now the archetypal powerful Texas male, complete with Stetson and cowboy boots. Gone was the sartorial association with dirt-poor farmers and, in its place, was an image that America, as opposed to the soil-scrappers of Central Texas, would recognise as uniquely Texan. The masculine image that Johnson adopted centred on popular Western iconography and this was synonymous with power.²³

In literary and cinematic representations of this concept the emphasis revolved around the problems of strong, confident, individualistic men and their attempts to maintain or to wrest power, either for themselves or for the society that they represented. These characters were instrumental in creating a patriarchal society in their image, borne out of manly endeavour. In cinema, there are countless

personifications of this kind of Texas manhood, perhaps the purest being the early cinematic representations of the Texas Rangers or the numerous characters played by war hero and actor Audie Murphy in the 1950s. John Wayne was also a regular contributor to the cinematic version of this ideal. Wayne's characters, Tom Dunson in Howard Hawk's *Red River* (1948) or Ethan Edwards in John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956), are good examples of the type of Texas male who was prepared to sacrifice his own life and happiness in order to ensure that the principles of white civilisation would continue to make progress.

The writers/academics J. Frank Dobie, Walter Prescott Webb and J. Evetts Haley were in the vanguard of those who exploited the mythic qualities of Texas manhood in order to create an image of Texas men which both promoted the state and corresponded with their political viewpoint. No other single factor has had such an effect on the perception of Texas masculinity as the political nature of the state. The essence of how Texas men are perceived, especially in popular culture, stems directly from the politically-based academic assessment of these three Texans which, in turn, owes much to the state's historical legacy. These men gave the previous stock view of Texas men, which had been cheapened by exposure in countless dime-novels, a large degree of official and academic credibility. Their purpose was further to empower white Texas maleness by distancing it from the debilitating, negative legacies of broader Southern history and create a model of Texas manhood that fully and legitimately embraced an image that reflected the legendary frontier power of Texas men. Whatever else happened to the idea of Texas manhood, and many things did before the twentieth-century ended, many of its roots lay in the series of truths, half-truths and lies that constituted the powerful myths that sprang from the Texas frontier. However, far from making a fresh start, these writers brought to their new

vision of white Texas masculinity the destructive and weakening racial baggage that had already blighted the image of Southern manhood in the rest of the nation. So deeply entrenched were these men in their own Southern legacy that their attempted creation of a new 'Western' type of manhood was still rooted within prejudices traditionally associated with the South.

Cultural commentators in the conservative Texas press whose prime motivation was, ostensibly, to see Texas recognised for artistic and, therefore, civilising achievement were also complicit in the promotion of the standard powerful image of white Texas men. These journalists to a large degree failed to engage with the negative images of Texas because, in their rush to accentuate Texas positives, they were fearful of admitting the presence of grossly damaging and culturally corrosive Texas negatives. This meant that they were unable or unwilling to combat the widespread and aesthetically destructive use of Texas male stereotypes.

The Powerless

The perception in popular culture of those white Texas men without power was less well-defined. There was little profit for American film-makers in the portrayal of those on the edges of society. In cinema, powerless initially Texans were largely ignored. Few sympathetic cinematic portrayals of poor Texans were made before the 1960s. It is revealing concerning the priorities of American film-makers that the most notable of these films, Victor Seastrom's *The Wind* (1928) and Jean Renoir's *The Southerner* (1945), were directed by non-Americans. Prior to 1963, American directors focussed their attention exclusively on the powerful model of Texas manhood. Powerless characters rarely instigated action; instead they merely became

foils for the dominant powerful characters. This was true whether the powerful character was designed to engender a sympathetic audience reaction or not. The effect of this constant stereotyping was to confirm in the public mind the secondary role in society of those Texas men without power or influence.²⁴

The powerless in cinema and literature will be divided into two broad categories. The first were the men who worked the land or were at the poor end of the state's ranching or oil economies. Power was out of the reach of these men and was, therefore, irrelevant. The main aspiration for this kind of Texas male was to keep the weight of an oppressive socio-economic system off his back. The literary genre known as 'sharecropping' fiction, which was prevalent in Texas between the wars, concentrated its focus on those Texas men without power. However, the dominant message for Texas manhood that this kind of writing carried was that, if a man worked hard enough and made the right choices in life, he could aspire to the benefits that socio-economic power could bring. The idea that a man would want to stay and develop within a socio-economically deprived culture was an option that was never seriously considered in 'sharecropping' fiction.

The kind of emphasis on white Texas masculinity offered by Mary Karr's memoir of her post-war Texas childhood, *The Liar's Club* (1995), is unusual in its focus on powerless men who relish life in their East Texas working-class community. Her father is described as a left-leaning, picket-line brawler who described a Republican as 'somebody who couldn't enjoy eating unless he knew somebody else was hungry.'²⁵ Politically radical Texas maleness such as this, common though it actually was in Texas in the 1950s, never caught the imagination of those who offered a contemporary image of Texas to a wider public through film or literature.

The main thrust of the liberal Texas press, especially the *Texas Observer*, was to

throw off the politically-potent stereotyped image of white Texas men in order that its readership could appreciate the reality of life as it impacted on socio-economically and racially disadvantaged Texas maleness. The desire of Ronnie Dugger, the paper's founding editor, was to move away from the standard icon and embrace the reality of Texas life as he saw it. In 1954, in a letter to a prospective employee, Dugger outlined his priorities. He wrote:

We want to know how Texans think; what they value and disavow; what they find worth giving their lives to; how they talk; what they steal, and why; how they subsist in state mental hospitals; what they think about Negroes; and so on.²⁶

The iconic status of Texas maleness was not only an embarrassment for the *Observer*, it was also a serious diversion away from where those who ran the paper believed the focus of Texas society should belong. The problems of race, poverty and the rights and representation of workers, were all, according to the *Observer*, being hidden by the rush in Texas to recreate an image which on one level had no relevance in a modern society but on another was, in fact, a serious and effective tool being used effectively by their political enemies.

The second category of powerless dealt with in film and literature offered an altogether different type of socio-economically deprived white Texas male. These were the men who responded violently to Texas society by engaging in criminal activity or experiencing life at the poor and violent edges of Texas life. The intensely political work of writers Edward Anderson and Nelson Algren purported to understand and sympathise with this manner of white Texas male.²⁷ Their writing

concentrated exclusively on the portrayal of the negative and debilitating aspects of a powerless existence. Anderson and Algren believed that, in a society dominated by capital, a positive, optimistic portrayal of working-class culture would have undermined their radical message. Instead, they created characters who either railed against the system or who fell under its heel. This version of white Texas maleness was chosen by Anderson and Algren because of its potential to be politically provocative. The desperado shared with his adversary within the law, as well as with the sharecropper, the cowboy and the oilman, the potential to carry a clear socio-political message.

The thesis which follows is divided into five chapters. Chapter one centres on the traditional, stereotypical view of white Texas maleness and analyses the key historical and socio-political dynamics behind the literary construction of the powerful Texas male icon. There are three sections here, each one dealing with the work of a seminal Texas writer. The writers concerned are J. Frank Dobie, Walter Prescott Webb and J. Evetts Haley, each of whom was influenced in different ways by the history of Texas and by the politics of the New Deal and Cold War.

In chapter two, the emphasis will fall on the perception of Texas manhood from writers who characterised in their work those male Texans who did not have any significant socio-economic or political power. The work of Nelson Algren and Edward Anderson predominates in this chapter. In order to compare the views of these writers with the opinions of the societal mainstream, their portrayal of this manner of Texas maleness is contrasted with how the Texas press reported the activities of the small-time bank robbers who infested Texas in the 1930s. The work of Anderson and Algren is as politically driven (though from a very different

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perspective) as that of their conservative contemporaries.

Chapters three and four are an examination of how the Texas press dealt with the live issue of the image of white Texas masculinity in film and literature from the 1940s until 1963. Chapter three analyses a conservative press that increasingly reflected the views of the Texas socio-economic and political elite. The influence of this elite, or establishment, in determining the nature and course of political and cultural debate in Texas was profound and should not be underestimated.²⁸ Chapter four focuses on how the liberal press in Texas, most notably the *Texas Observer*, dealt in this period with the Texas male image. Important sources here include a number of critical reviews of key films and books.

Chapter five looks at the reasons behind the rapid downward spiral of the Texas male image in the aftermath of the Kennedy killing, and as a result of the Presidency of the white Texas male, Lyndon Baines Johnson. Selected film and literature is again analysed in order to gauge the motivation of writers and film-makers who saw in white Texas maleness all that they believed was wrong with American society in the politically radical 1960s.

The intention in this thesis is to focus on how Texans constructed and perceived the white Texas male image. For the most part, film-makers who dealt with the characterisation of Texas maleness were non-Texans, as were a certain number of the writers dealt with here. Non-Texas input is analysed from the perspective of Texas critics or cultural commentators. This allows the outsider's vision of Texas and its manhood to be examined in relation to Texas-based critical analysis.

Many categories of collective groups of males have, like white Texas manhood, been promoted as being representative of classes, countries, peoples or cultures. For instance, in another American context, one such icon is the buckskinned Kentuckian,

whose frontier exploits as fierce warrior, child of the forest or simple savage have been widely chronicled in fiction and film. In his book, *The Frontier Mind*, Arthur K. Moore examined the degree to which this male American icon deserved his influential status.²⁹ Moore argued that, although the Kentuckian was indeed an important contributor to the social formation of the West, he was, in fact, ‘a great deal more than the simple-minded Indian fighter imagined in frontier chronicles.’³⁰ Moore asserted that those who saw fit to construct these men as an influential, romantic illusion were motivated by a nationalistic need to promote the West as a separate, appealing and uniquely American culture.

Therefore, according to Moore, use of the image of the Kentucky frontiersman was designed, rightly or wrongly, to promote a positive image of a seminal time and place in American history. This thesis will show that a similar process occurred when those who wished to promote the state of Texas constructed a positive image centring on the supposed sterling qualities of the state’s manhood. The initial motivation in this case was a desire to present Texas, in the decade of its centennial celebrations, in the most flattering light.

This thesis demonstrates, therefore, one way, of many, in which the image of men can be constructed, cultivated and employed for societal purposes. The history, culture and socio-political structure of Texas are unique. However, the employment of a male image for socio-political purposes is not.³¹ Maleness, in this context, irrespective of whether it represented the powerful or the powerless, easily lent itself to distortion and manipulation. The society to be analysed here was one in which whiteness was socially, and not just physically, determined. By demonstrating how this impacted on Texas society, the thesis endeavours to make a contribution to the study of both masculinity and whiteness. Since it examines key structures of Texas

society, most notably the workings of the press and the socio-political establishment, it should illuminate key aspects of twentieth-century Texas history. Finally, the analysis of film and literature contained within the thesis, it is hoped, will also add to our knowledge of the cultural history of both Texas and the United States.

¹ It is common in written work on the state of Texas to employ the word 'Texas' as an adjective – as in Texas food, Texas politics, Texas music, Texas maleness. Tom Pilkington in *State of Mind: Texas Literature and Culture* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998), p. 8, states that this convention 'rather than diminishing over the last few years has if anything gathered momentum.' Pilkington construes this as an indication of Texans strong sense of themselves as being 'a breed apart from, and probably superior to, the common run of Americans.' My main justification for consistently employing 'Texas' as opposed to 'Texan' is that this thesis is dealing with the construction of Texas masculinity as opposed to the reality of it. The fact that a number of the key books used in this thesis employ the word Texas in this way has furthered encouraged me to employ this custom.

² <http://www.2004nycgop.org/speeches>.

³ George Norris Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics: The Primitive Years, 1938-1957* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), p. 7.

⁴ Roland Bathes, *Mythologies* (London: Paladin, 1973), p. 162.

⁵ From e-mail correspondence with author, 26 December 2003.

⁶ Eric F. Goldman, *The Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Dell, 1969), p. 16.

⁷ John Gunther, *Inside U.S.A.* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1951), p. 187.

⁸ For details of Texan military involvement see T. R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans* (New York: Da Capo, 2000), pp. 653-55.

⁹ Although not a native Texan, Chapman, a member of 'Delta Force', lived in San Antonio, Texas, and his parents reside in Georgetown, Texas. Without exception the Texas press reported his death as the demise of one of their own. *Austin American-Statesman*, 8 January 2002; *Houston Chronicle*, 9 January 2002.

¹⁰ Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, pp. 81-92.

¹¹ Much has been written, however, on race in Texas from a Tejano or Mexican perspective. See, for example, David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987) and Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality* (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1979). On Black Texans, see Alwyn Barr, *A History of African Americans in Texas, 1528-1995* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).

¹² Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

¹³ For an example of this see J. W. Williamson, *Hillbillyland* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

¹⁴ David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*

(London: Verso, 1991).

¹⁵ Foley, *The White Scourge*, p. 213; Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, p. 13.

¹⁶ Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), p. 9.

¹⁷ Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

¹⁸ Rupert Wilkinson, *American Tough: The Tough Guy Tradition and American Character* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984).

¹⁹ Steven Cohan, *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

²⁰ Cohan, *Masked Men*, p. 209. Clift played opposite John Wayne in Howard Hawks' *Red River* (1948). Dean played opposite Rock Hudson in George Stevens' *Giant* (1956).

²¹ Additional useful works on masculinity, whiteness and the Western myth that are also important in the context of this thesis, include Jenni Calder, *There Must be a Lone Ranger: The Myth and Reality of the American Wild West* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974); Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Mike Hill, ed., *Whiteness: A Critical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

²² I refer specifically to the growth of the Farmer's Alliance, which was born in Lampasas, Texas, in 1875, and the growth in Texas of the Knights of Labor (an organisation which had six assemblies alone in San Antonio in 1886 and an estimated 30,000 members statewide), the Greenbackers and the Grange. An idea of the kind of sentiment behind the Texas Farmers' Alliance can be gauged in a statement issued in 1888 that protested against 'the shameful abuses . . . industrial classes are now suffering at the hands of the capitalists and powerful corporations.' Quoted in Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, p. 618. Details of the manner and extent of Texas protest and radicalism can be found in the following: Harold A. Shapiro, 'The Labor Movement in San Antonio, Texas, 1865-1915,' *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 36 (June 1955), pp. 160-75; Ruth A. Allen, 'Chapters in the History of Organised Labor in Texas,' *University of Texas Publications*, No. 4143 (November 1941); John S. Spratt, *The Road to Spindletop: Economic Change in Texas, 1875-1901* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1955), pp. 228-45; Ralph Smith, 'The Farmer's Alliance in Texas, 1875-1900,' *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 48 (January, 1975), pp. 346-49. Opinions on the degree of racism in radical Texas and Southern organisations in this period is mixed. Melton A. McLaurin, in 'The Racial Policies of the Knights of Labor and the Organisation of Southern Black Workers,' *Labor History*, Vol. 17, (1976), p. 568, states: 'Apparent differences among whites over the 'Negro question' reflected disagreements only over the degree to which Blacks were to be subjugated and the tactics to be employed.' On the other hand, Ruth Allen in Chapters in the History of Organised Labor in Texas, p. 187, states that: 'Racial recriminations and persecutions do not build the subtle shadows of the Southern scene. Not bitterness but harmony limn the picture.' Neil Foley, in *The White Scourge*, p. 95, points out that radical organisations in Texas in the early twentieth century distanced themselves from policies of integration because of their belief that it was racial integration that led to the failure of the radicalism in the nineteenth-century.

²³ For the early political life of Johnson; see Paul Keith Conkin, *Big Daddy from the Pedernales: Lyndon Baines Johnson* (Boston: Twayne, 1986); Robert Dallek, *Lone Star Rising: Lyndon Johnson and his Times, 1908-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Robert A. Caro, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Knopf, 1982); Irwin Unger, *LBJ: A Life* (New York: Wiley, 1999). For Johnson's presidential years, see Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and his Times, 1961-1973* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

²⁴ Good examples of cinematic notions of graded whiteness can be found in the following pre-1960

films: George Stevens' *Giant* (1956), Jack Conway's *Boom Town* (1940) and Vincente Minnelli's *Home From the Hill* (1959).

²⁵ Mary Karr, *The Liar's Club* (New York: Penguin, 1995), p. 21.

²⁶ Ronnie Dugger to Sue Seitz, 16 February 1955, *Texas Observer* Papers, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

²⁷ See Nelson Algren, *The Texas Stories of Nelson Algren* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); Edward Anderson *Thieves Like Us* (London: Prion, 1999).

²⁸ As well as George Norris Green's *The Establishment in Texas Politics*, which sets out to confirm the impact of the Texas business and political elite on Texas life, other works, such as Patricia Evridge Hill's *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), confirm the influence of the Texas Establishment. Hill states, for instance, that: 'the new elite had significant effects on public life in the decades after the Second World War.' p. 126.

²⁹ Arthur K. Moore, *The Frontier Mind: A Cultural Analysis of the Kentucky Frontiersman* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957).

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. vii.

³¹ See, for instance, James D. Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany* (New York: Arno Press, 1975); George L. Moss, *Nationalism and Sexuality* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985).

1. On the Trail of the Cattlemen's Civilisation

Works by J. Frank Dobie, J. Evetts Haley . . . and to some extent Walter Prescott Webb all convey the impression that life was somehow better on the open range of the nineteenth-century when customs handed down from the Spanish blended with the energies of Anglo-Saxons to produce the flowering of a cattlemen's civilisation.

Walter L. Buenger, Texas Historian, 1991.¹

Webb, a historian and author, and Dobie, a folklorist, are important in the context of this thesis because of the influential picture they painted of Texas manhood from the 1930s through to the 1960s. Webb and Dobie, along with naturalist Roy Bedichek, are, according to essayist and novelist Larry McMurtry, the 'Big Three' of Texas writing. Although fundamentally critical of their work, and dismayed that they could occupy such a high place in the state's literary world, McMurtry acknowledged that the writings of Dobie and Webb were crucially important in the creation of the popular view of Texas which, he believed, was overly sentimental and romantic.² Others Texas writers who came after Dobie and Webb were also critical of their work, while being similarly convinced of their influence.³ From a different perspective, Texas politician Ralph Yarborough also recognised the essence of their role in Texas and wrote that Dobie and Webb were 'names to stir a Texan's blood and pride . . . For these are the names which, in this generation, evoke thoughts of freedom -- free men, free thought and free expression.'⁴

Texas academics Joe B. Frantz, Tom Pilkington and Don Graham readily accept the key role that Webb and Dobie played in Texas culture. Frantz wrote, in 1988, the

centennial year of Webb's birth, of the lasting legacy of Webb's work: 'His importance in the world of ideas – in intellectual circles – stands higher than it did when he died.'⁵ Pilkington wrote of Dobie: 'His fresh renderings of Texas and southwestern folklore . . . helped to initiate a literary tradition in a region where no such tradition had previously existed.'⁶ Don Graham declared that:

By the time of his death in 1964, J. Frank Dobie had achieved an extraordinary reputation as a regional spokesman for the Southwest, especially for Texas. He was our Frost, our Faulkner, our Sandburg – the local sage who spoke for the region.⁷

According to Larry McMurtry, J. Evetts Haley wrote 'the most impressive Texas book of the thirties.'⁸ This work, a biography of the Texas cattleman, Charles Goodnight, was a good example of where Haley's interest lay with regard to the history of Texas and of his fascination with a certain type of Texas maleness.⁹ McMurtry also identified the fundamental difference between Haley and his contemporaries, Webb and Dobie, when he wrote of Haley: 'it is a pity he has contracted so virulent a conservatism. In recent years he has become the Captain Queeg of Texas letters.' Haley's political extremism impacted greatly on his view of Texas manhood. He wrote extensively and passionately, throughout the whole chronological remit of this thesis, about the men he believed had been responsible for the creation of Texas as he knew it. These men, Haley made clear, were the personification of his political beliefs made flesh. Haley's life's work, therefore, was to assert his political opinions through the figure of the white Texas male. His profile in Texas, already high through his work as a historian, author and political

campaigner, was greatly enhanced in 1964 when his controversial book on Lyndon Johnson, *A Texan Looks at Lyndon*, was published. According to some estimates this book sold over seven million copies nationwide.¹⁰

Dobie, Webb and Haley were, therefore, massive figures in Texas cultural, political and academic life during the period covered by this thesis. It is vitally important to understand that these men vigorously asserted a vision of Texas which was based around the potency of the state's manhood. They did not, of course, create the Texas myth; what they did do, however, was to provide it with a degree of intellectual credence. Webb, Dobie and Haley created from the bones of Texas history a model of white Texas manhood that set the benchmark for all subsequent portrayals, be they complimentary or critical. The Texas writer Mimi Swartz wrote of the dilemma that Texans found themselves in during the 1930s, the decade of the Texas centennial and a time when, according to Kenneth Ragsdale, 'Texas was a state floundering in social, cultural and economic adolescence, awaiting the maturity of adulthood.'¹¹ Swartz wrote:

Texans began to wrestle with two contradictory notions. One was imposed from the outside: We were inferior because we were uneducated and chose to live in a place with an unbearable climate and a scrubby, hostile landscape. The other came from within: We were superior because we had triumphed over adversity and made ourselves rich. How could we make others see us as we saw ourselves?¹²

The answer, courtesy of the New York publisher and economist Theodore H. Price, was to dress the state in the fresh new regalia of the West and encourage writers such

as Webb, Dobie and Haley to lionise the state's 'gloriously romantic history.'¹³

Dobie

From the late 1920s through to his death in 1964, Dobie was, arguably, the most recognisable, influential and controversial figure in the small world of Texas liberalism. His books and his newspaper columns and articles ensured that he was known state-wide and was a key point of reference for those wishing to learn about the culture of Texas. For good or bad, Dobie also influenced the way that a generation of Texas writers, historians and social commentators thought about their state. For some, such as Henry Nash Smith and Ronnie Dugger, Dobie offered a fresh perspective on the history and politics of Texas. For others, such as Larry McMurtry, Dobie's work and legacy were actually detrimental to an accurate understanding of their home state.¹⁴ It is, therefore, important to understand how this seminal figure came first to view white Texas maleness and how contemporary issues influenced his perspective and those in the cultural milieu that surrounded him. In comparison with the direct path of J. Evetts Haley, the trajectory of Dobie's life and work was complex. Both men started from the same source and appreciated many of the same masculine attributes. However, it was the reality of life away from the simple satisfaction of working on the land that crucially influenced their work. While the world around him was disintegrating, Haley found abiding solace in his construction of the character of the Texas male. In contrast, once Dobie's confidence in the ability of Texas manhood to provide answers was shaken, his perspective on the idea of white Texas maleness was redefined. This section will explain why this was so.

Dobie was born on a ranch in Live Oak County Texas in 1888 and lived there until

he was sixteen years of age. The environment of Dobie's formative years, the South Texas Brush Country, was important to his development for a number of reasons. In the first place, he grew up in a location with a large and culturally-influential Spanish-speaking population and this triggered a life-long interest in the culture of Mexico and the traditions of the Mexican people in Texas. Dobie's professed appreciation of aspects of Mexican culture was a contributory factor in his construction of white Texas maleness. As a member of white society reared in the border region of Texas, his perspective came, of course, from a position of power and this, it has been argued, ensured that his attitude toward the Mexican people was superficial and patronising. Arnoldo De Leon states that Dobie 'was inclined toward painting Texas Mexicans as quaint colourful people.'¹⁵ And Larry McMurtry, attempting to explain the role of Mexico in Dobie's work, wrote: 'The South Texas that Dobie knew was dominated, then as now, by very ambitious men, and it is not surprising that he should have had to cross the Rio Grande to find his figure of innocence.'¹⁶ Like many of his generation of white Texans, Dobie was steeped in Southern culture. He was later to describe this attachment as 'my youthful adoration of General Robert E. Lee and the Lost Cause.' Dobie grew to detach himself from both the sentimental and racist aspects of Southern culture and came to see expressions of Southern affinity as emanating 'more through hate than love'.¹⁷ It is, however, important to note that Dobie also saw in Mexican culture much of what white Texas and its manhood was rapidly losing. Mexico, and the macho male culture that Dobie believed thrived there, provided a potential setting for male endeavour that twentieth-century Texas could no longer match. With the onset of modernity and white civilisation in Texas, Mexico offered an environment that was more conducive to the kind of adventure that was common in Texas in the years before Dobie's generation was born.

Key Dobie works, such as *Tongues of the Monte* (1935) and *The Mexico I Like* (1942), demonstrate his active awareness of Mexican male culture and its potential as a setting where white Texas males could test themselves and try to be what they could not be currently in their own land.

Where Dobie was born was ranching country and the cultures of all races were affected by the all-encompassing presence and mores of the cattle industry. The men whom Dobie admired worked and lived on the land, predominantly in ranching. Through all of the changes in attitude that afflicted Texas during Dobie's lifetime, he remained an unswerving champion of this manner of manhood. In his construction of the cattlemen's lives he did not, however, adopt the same sense of uncritical admiration for all men connected with the cattle industry that would be obvious in the work of Haley. Dobie saw and understood that much of what went on in the industry was reprehensible. A letter he wrote in the year of his death goes some way toward explaining his feelings about some ranchers. He wrote: 'These oil-rich ranchers who think that a ranch hand who wants ten dollars more a month are leeches on society are not to me among the admirable.'¹⁸ In his final book, *Cow People* (1964), Dobie again went out of his way to paint a negative portrait of ranchers when he felt it necessary. Of the famous cowman Shanghai Pierce, Dobie observed that he 'fenced in little men and poor widows and drove off their milch cows in his herds.'¹⁹

Like Webb and Haley, Dobie was raised in a home that was economically comfortable and which encouraged engagement with education and a sense of responsibility toward white-dominated society. His father was described in a biography of Dobie as 'a pillar of the community who served for years as a county commissioner, sat on juries nearly every term of court, and built two schoolhouses and two Methodist churches.'²⁰ There is little evidence to suggest that Dobie's father

ranked among the class of ruthless go-getters whom McMurtry later identified as dominating South Texas society. His parents could afford books and encouraged their children to read material that emphasised the superiority and strength of British culture and which dwelt on the heroism and greatness of characters created by writers such as Sir Walter Scott, Charles Dickens and John Bunyan. He was also made aware of his connection to that culture through his family heritage, which, according to his mother, was solidly Scottish. In short, Dobie was at the apex of the multi-layered racial pyramid in Texas. He grew up in economic circumstances and with all of the racial qualities that would have marked him, in this racially and socio-economically divided environment, as having all of the qualities necessary to follow his father as a keystone of the dominant white middle-class community.

Dobie graduated from Southwestern University in Georgetown in 1910 and worked as a journalist and teacher before completing his Masters degree at Columbia University in New York. After spending a short period at the University of Texas in Austin, two years with the field artillery during the Great War, and a spell back working on his uncle's ranch, he returned to Austin and the university in 1921. In 1922, he became secretary of the Texas Folklore Society and his first book, *A Vaquero of the Brush Country*, was published in 1929. Dobie assumed the role of the state's primary literary and cultural figure during the Texas Centennial decade, the 1930s. As head of the Texas Folklore Society, he published such works as *Coronado's Children* (1931), *On the Open Range* (1931), *Tales of the Mustang* (1936) and *The Flavor of Texas* (1936). His book *Guide to the Life and Literature of the Southwest* (1943) ensured his place as the spokesman for white Texas and Southwestern culture in general.

Dobie's early work sought to establish white men and their adventures as the

heartbeat of Texas. Contemporary reviews indicate that, for sections of the Texas press at least, he did just that. The *El Paso Times* described *Coronado's Children* in the following terms: 'Frank Dobie has captured the very spirit of the Southwest and put it into his book.'²¹ L. L. Click, professor of English at the University of Texas, wrote in the *Denison Herald*: 'The Southwest has never before had a book to come more directly out of the heart of its own earth.'²² *The Texas Weekly* described Dobie glowingly and wrote that he was, 'uniquely the embodiment of Southwestern cultural values.'²³ By the early 1930s, Dobie was, therefore, firmly established as a spokesman for the idea that modern, ever-changing Texas society owed its greatest debt to the past endeavour of white men. The image of white Texas masculinity that he constructed and maintained in all of his works, and which first brought him to public attention, had at its core the overall manly excellence of the characters he built from folktales and history.

The extent and power of masculinity in the society in which Dobie grew to manhood and began his professional career was all-embracing. It was the norm in this society to measure a man by the standards usually associated with the rigorous and violent times of Texas history. An example of this can be found in a letter from fellow writer and academic E. E. Davis, recommending Dobie for a post as head of the English department at a Texas college. Davis wrote,

He [Dobie] is a Texas man . . . Dobie is a real man – a he. He grew up on a ranch in southwest Texas . . . I regard him as the most virile man of the English department of the University of Texas during his day. If you are in the market for a strong man for your English department, I would suggest that you get in touch with Mr. Dobie . . . you will find him thoroughly saturated with that

peculiar patriotism for one's state that none but a loyal Texan can feel and understand.²⁴

Davis does not focus on Dobie's ability as a teacher, nor does he stress Dobie's competence in the field in which he would have been expected to teach. Instead, he places great emphasis on Dobie's strength as a man of action and strength and on his qualifications as a Texan. Both factors, of course, were not unrelated in the eyes of Davis, or Dobie himself.

Dobie was, of course, part of this male-dominated society and expressed himself in its terms. In a letter to Tom Lea, Dobie outlined his beliefs of the prerequisites that make up a male artist:

In his mind [referring to Tom Wells, a mutual friend] you seem to stand apart from a lot of writers and painters who are not men-writing or men-painting. I am borrowing the phrase from Emerson, who defined a scholar as a 'Man Thinking' – not just a thinker. And Nietzsche . . . said the first qualification of a philosopher was to be a man.²⁵

Maleness, and how Dobie and his circle of Texas writers and academics defined it, was, therefore, of crucial importance in their work concerning the image of Texas.

There were, however, few instances in the early work of Dobie where the theme of masculinity was discussed in any satisfactory depth, neither was there any sense of the real historical context behind his constructions of Texas manhood -- which were, essentially, anecdotal stories of men who dealt in interesting and humorous ways with the circumstances they found themselves in. Beyond this superficial level of

narrative, little of social or historical import can be derived from these stories.

Francis Edward Abernethy wrote of Dobie's work: 'His forte did not lie in discovering the part of a man's life that would give him soul as well as flesh. Dobie was creative in his own way, but this was not it.'²⁶ In his introduction to his first work, *A Vaquero of the Brush Country* (1929), which told the story of real-life Texas cowboy John D. Young, Dobie explained:

Although there were cowboys, mean, vicious, vulgar, dishonest, and cheap, even ignorant, they did not fit in; the general run of cowboys . . . could not be and were not ignorant or morally degraded. Yet, partly on account of the reasons that restrained Thackeray, a full delineation of the cowboy's masculinity, a quality interwoven with morality, is not in this book entered into . . . A frank and full - that is, a naturalistic - delineation of the cowboy as a man apart from his work and yet as a natural product of his own soil, remains to be done.²⁷

The importance of Dobie's work as it relates to the image of white Texas masculinity, therefore, lies not in any intricate investigation of the lives of these men but, rather, in the broad popular image that he created in his work, which, according to two latter-day Texas historians, he saw as 'a source of positive values relevant to modern life.'²⁸

Dobie garnished the story of John D. Young's life in Texas with his own interpretation of Texas history. His sweep was broad, taking in Mexican bandits, Billy the Kid, Indian wars and countless anecdotes about life on the prairie. Dobie also offered a series of political opinions on matters including the state of relations with Mexico, race and the ownership of land. The book was, above all, a testament to

the courage, endeavour and ingenuity of white Texas men in moulding nature, horses, cattle, Indians and Mexicans into a shape that would conform to their vision of Texas. Dobie sifted through and identified what he saw as the rotten core of white Texas manhood, in order that his idea of the best of Texas maleness could be seen in a clearer light. Figures such as the outlaw Billy the Kid and the mélange of rustlers and horse-thieves that infested the state were featured, but given short shrift. Dobie explained his priorities: 'one is likely to overestimate the number of thieves and outlaws in the country and overlook the upright citizens, who owned the country and made it what it later became.'²⁹ Included in this elite group were expansive ranchers such as John Chisum, John Adair and Charles Goodnight. Dobie also joined in the ubiquitous adulation of the Texas Rangers, citing such men as Captain McNelly and Jesse Lee Hall, whom he described as 'remarkable' and 'outstanding' respectively.³⁰

Dobie did not only create an image of white Texas maleness, he also cared passionately about how the image was nurtured and how it could be used. He believed that one of the consequences of the manipulation of the image of white Texas men was how the people of Texas thought of themselves and were thought of by others. Dobie's construction of the image was designed to confirm to the people of Texas that beyond the crassness of the popular stereotype lay a deep seam of authentic Texas male heroism and strength. In the potency of the history-based Texas paradigm, therefore, lay the potential for the Texas of the future. In the events and debate surrounding the Texas centennial celebrations of 1936, Dobie was given a platform on which he could express to the people of his home state his deeply-held convictions about the image of Texas and its heroes. The centennial, in conjunction with the influence of the contemporary political and socio-economic scene, sparked Dobie's sense of righteous indignation over what Texas was and how it was

portrayed.

Dobie and the Italian Sculptor

For those who felt passionately about the image of Texas in this period, events surrounding the Texas centennial provided a platform for breast-beating on the subject of how best the Texas image, and historical Texas maleness, should be represented. Given the purpose of the centennial celebrations and the way in which they were approached – that is, to celebrate in as congratulatory a fashion as possible the first hundred years of Texas history – it was almost inevitable that they would cover over any dissent or debate on the subject of the state's image. One clash of ideas that emerged was between the Italian-born sculptor, Pompeo Coppini, and Dobie, both of whom had been asked to contribute to the centennial effort. The very fact that Dobie's profile and reputation as an academic and writer who was concerned with a definite image of Texas and its manhood had seen him appointed to the State Historical Commission to advise on matters surrounding the centennial, provides an insight into the mind-set of some of those concerned with creating an image of Texas during the socio-economically and politically difficult times of the 1930s. However, Coppini's involvement in the centennial showed that there was no oneness of view regarding the image of the state among those involved in organising the centennial celebrations.³¹

Dobie had long believed that neither Coppini nor his works were capable of capturing the essence of Texas maleness as Dobie felt and understood it. The Italian, in Dobie's estimation, was an outsider whose inspiration came from a supercilious aesthetic source unconnected to the Texas experience. The contrast in style, content

and expression between the two men could not have been starker. Dobie worked hard to nurture an image that encouraged others to see him as the personification of Texas. His biographer, Dallas journalist Lon Tinkle, in a chapter entitled 'Mr Texas,' described Dobie as, 'a symbol of the state, like cattle and oil rigs and cactus and the Alamo.'³² Coppini, on the other hand, worked equally hard to generate a persona that accentuated European grandeur. When he first arrived in Texas in the early 1900s, he discovered a less competitive environment, for sculptors at least, and set out to create an image that pleased and complimented those in Texas who sought an aesthetic and intellectually-challenging outlet through which to spend their money. The Coppini style was classical and the Italian believed that his work, at core, should convey something of the highest thoughts of mankind. Dobie, in contrast, thought that statues and monuments that purported to carry a Texas theme should mirror something of the male-based and gritty reality of Texas history. That historical reality, for Dobie, centred on the cattle industry and the men who made it. He resented the intrusion into Texas cultural life of a man whose vision ignored the endeavour and the trials of this manner of Texas maleness. In a newspaper article of 1936, Dobie specifically focussed on what statues and monuments in his home state lacked in terms of the manner of maleness that had given Texas worldwide fame: 'Nothing consequential for the Texas cowboy or the longhorn, figures that have made the name of Texas familiar wherever the pulses of life beat among the reading peoples of the world.'³³

Dobie's abiding desire was to stay true to the men and the way of life that, he believed, had given Texas its special character and had created an order of manhood that the world admired. In order that this vision would be perpetuated, it was essential that representations of Texas had to revolve around those men and that industry. If a more cerebral approach was to be taken, and Dobie was all in favour of making the

Texas experience more highbrow, it should emerge and be developed from within. Ideally it would spring from the dignity of the men, the functional nobility of the cattle and horses, the testing grandeur of the landscape, or the dirt and hardship that marked the Texas experience.

Coppini's vision sprang instead from his Italian classical training and his idea was that this could elevate Texas and its heroes on to a higher level. He wrote to Dobie from New York in 1935 and explained that his work for the centennial would be 'A permanent, valuable and inspiring contribution to the glorification of a tragic but romantic history full of color and heroism.'³⁴ Dobie, however, continued to attack the work and ideas of Coppini and, in 1939, described the representations of Texas heroes on Coppini's Alamo Cenotaph monument as looking 'as if they came to the Alamo to have their pictures taken.'³⁵ Coppini's reply to Dobie's criticism adequately sums up the Italian's feelings with regard to the status of heroes, whether they were Texan or not. He wrote:

My figures are properly dressed. I hope not many will blame me for trying to portray the various characters with sympathy and refinement. In all of my travels over Texas I have come in contact with but few, very few, of the wild types that someone erroneously may think our Texas pioneers were. In my conception of things, no noble soul ever emanated from a wild brute.³⁶

His attack was aimed at Dobie and what the Texan represented, or lacked, in terms of art and culture. He later wrote of Dobie's negative influence on that stage of his career and, in the process, accused Dobie of being a drunk:

J. Frank Dobie, folklorist, who wanted to impress people by uncouth mannerisms, that he knew the way of Western life and of Texas . . . I never thought him vicious or mentally unbalanced as he may have proved himself later to me, and to many others, by trying to use his position in the Historical Commission with obnoxious obsession, and to destroy me in order to favour others . . . if he had not mixed his venom with his 'liquid spirits.'³⁷

Texas, its history, and certainly its historians, was of little real interest to Coppini. Of the history regarding the Alamo he wrote:

Texans . . . are interested in studying it as it was, or to tell the world how it did happen that Texas became independent. Who cared? After all, only a few men died in the Alamo Plaza, and today as we live in a global war age, where millions died, the Alamo to us appears only as a brawl between a small group of brave men and a better organised, and much larger, military force.³⁸

This reduction of the importance of the Alamo conflict to the status of a local skirmish is inaccurate in both a Texas and an American context. The symbolism of the Alamo, as Dobie understood, has a resonance in white Texas culture and history that is unequalled.

The figure of Coppini was conspicuous in Texas for almost forty years from around 1901, when he won a state competition to construct a monument to Terry's Texas Rangers that was placed on the Capitol grounds.³⁹ For some Texans, especially those who backed him financially and promoted him socially, Coppini represented an opportunity to shake off the parochialism of the state and to embrace ideas that went

far beyond its restrictive intellectual and aesthetic confines. For others, like Dobie, he symbolised an abandonment of Texas history and character at a time when assessment and reconstruction of both was needed most.

The priority for Dobie and the rest of the Texas purists in the fight against Coppini's view of Texas was first to authenticate, and then to stabilise, their earthy male-based vision of white Texas society. The artist and writer Tom Lea was one of Dobie's supporters. In 1939, he wrote to Dobie with regard to the Alamo monument:

I want to write you right away to tell you how much I love you for being what Texas is in my own mind. Your article concerning the monstrosity at San Antonio is one of the grandest things I have read about the true heart of Texas.⁴⁰

The Coppini controversy continued and expanded throughout most of the 1930s, and during this time Dobie was certain of his position with regard to how best to portray the image of Texas and its manhood. The nature of the opposition, in the garish and intensely un-Texas figure of the smock-coated Italian Coppini, probably encouraged Dobie's belief that he and those who dwelt on the history of those who worked on the land, were the true recorders of Texas history.

Dobie and the Texas Establishment

As far as Dobie was concerned, conservative politicians and businessmen were the antithesis of the men who worked the land and added to the quality of the Texas image through sweat, endeavour and a sense of independence. As Texas society changed and the face of Texas manhood became increasingly associated with business

and conservative political thinking, Dobie reacted by turning away from the popular image of Texas maleness and all that it had come to represent in political terms.

Francis Edward Abernethy remarked of Dobie that it was World War II that 'brought him face to face with the modern world.'⁴¹

Any study of J. Frank Dobie, especially if it seeks to look at his view of the image of Texas masculinity, should understand the fundamental changes to his worldview that came gradually in the decade that straddled 1940, and continued to have an effect on him until his death in 1964. The key influences on Dobie during this period were contemporary politics and his period of exile in England in 1944. The nature of maleness that Dobie admired prior to this period was no different to that he admired after. Most importantly, his faith in the dominant role of the white Texas male was unshaken. However, the manner in which Dobie presented his stringent view of what best represented Texas maleness, and the importance that he placed on it, was profoundly affected by how he perceived the place of white Texas masculinity in Texas society. In short, as he gained experience and grew intellectually, Dobie became embarrassingly aware of the limitations of Texas culture when placed alongside the concerns and achievements of the wider world. In a letter to his friend and fellow writer, Tom Lea, written from England in 1944, Dobie expressed the reasons for his conversion. He wrote:

I got belly tired of the Texas bragging and nationalism fever. The truth is that I felt freer in England than I feel in this land of the free and the home of the brave. What our people need is less satisfaction with themselves and more civilisation that consists less of 'machinery'. The time when I rated Custer's Last Stand painted on a wagon sheet as being more important to the West than

the Blue Boy is past.⁴²

Before he left for England, he encountered a degree of political conservatism that not only offended his political beliefs but also, eventually, put paid to his career as an academic. He wrote to Lea in 1943 outlining his concerns and dissatisfaction with the state of politics in Texas:

I have unqualified faith in fighters and workers. It is these damned fascists at home, in politics, in rightly established positions to pay politicians and direct newspapers, who make me fear for the country and the world. Take the University of Texas. Thanks to appointments from O'Daniel and Coke Stevenson, all our regents now, with one or two exceptions, are corporation lawyers and oil millionaires.⁴³

These letters tell us that Dobie's cultural and political sensibilities were sharpened by his reaction to the events of this period.

As important as external influences, however, was Dobie's growing awareness of how the image of Texas maleness could be manipulated from within by those with a cultural, socio-economic and political agenda different to his own. Dobie was sickened by the macho political figures who came to dominate Texas starting in the 1930s and who became synonymous with the image of the state. These included senior Texas politicians such as Martin Dies, Coke Stevenson, Alan Shivers and Wilbur Lee 'Pappy' O'Daniel, not to mention those who controlled policy at the University of Texas, as well as fellow historian J. Evetts Haley and his rightist cohorts.⁴⁴ This was also a time when the capitalist entrepreneur, in the larger-than-

life form of the Texas millionaire, was challenging the image of the Texas cowboy as the dominant male image of the state.

Much of Dobie's venom was aimed at O'Daniel, the Ohio-born flour salesman who became governor of Texas in 1938. The new governor's association with the University of Texas at Austin brought Dobie into close contact and conflict with political appointees on the Board of Regents. Dobie accused O'Daniel of 'stacking the board of regents of the university with the rich and the reactionary regardless of intellectual qualifications.'⁴⁵ This argument would eventually lead to Dobie leaving the University of Texas in controversial and much publicised circumstances in 1947. O'Daniel was closely linked to corporate big business.⁴⁶ At a meeting in Dallas in August 1942, Dobie asserted that O'Daniel 'has obtained the poor man's votes and the rich man's money by promising each that he would protect him against the other.'⁴⁷ Dobie feared that the mix of corporate capitalism and its political agents would irrevocably alter the culture of Texas. He wrote in 1943 that 'the reactionaries have been pretty much in the saddle over here. They own Texas now.' For Dobie, the male culture of the Establishment, with its emphasis on obtaining power via its financial wherewithal, was not conducive to his own model of Texas maleness and needed challenging.

Dobie worked hard to deny O'Daniel his place as an elected politician. In a series of articles that were syndicated across Texas prior to O'Daniel's Senate election fight against James Allred and Dan Moody in 1942, Dobie questioned every aspect of O'Daniel's politics and, importantly, his credentials as a man, in this case a man who would be prepared to fight for his country. At one point, Dobie queried O'Daniel's qualities as a man and a patriot:

Some men, of course, never develop mentally. W. Lee O'Daniel is one of them, though one might speculate on what effect army life might have had on him had he not been so successful in keeping out of it during the last war.⁴⁸

O'Daniel's lack of involvement during the First World War was at the forefront of Dobie's attack on the erstwhile flour-salesman. In an article in the *Conroe Courier*, Dobie chided O'Daniel's description of talk of war as 'a silly, sissy thing', by again questioning his commitment to his country in times of crisis. Dobie wrote: 'He showed his patriotism in those days by painting the Stars and Stripes on the automobile on which he was peddling flour.'⁴⁹ Dobie wanted to turn O'Daniel's portrayal of war in feminine terms around, to show that it was in fact the politician who was less than manly.

It was, however, much more than O'Daniel's ties to the Texas Establishment or lack of manly patriotic fervour that offended Dobie. The politician symbolised a version of Texas that Dobie was not part of and did not readily empathise with. O'Daniel was a liar and a charlatan in classic Southern demagogic mode: a second-rate Huey Long who constructed an image based on down-home Christian honesty and anti-politician rhetoric. His message was conveyed via radio to a willing and susceptible audience. O'Daniel had also toured the state extensively, accompanied by his own band of hillbilly musicians, The Light Crust Doughboys, and had promised the implementation of radical policies such as a substantial increase in the old-age pension, all of which he reneged on when elected. The politician took his support predominately from rural East Texas. George Norris Green described O'Daniel's appeal to these voters as follows: 'He had communicated with the elderly, rural, and low-income folks for years, telling them things they wanted to hear, making it easier

to be poor.⁵⁰ This was not Dobie country and these people were not the free independent spirits whom Dobie saw as predominating in the West Texas cattle industry. When Tom Lea, Sr. wrote to Dobie in 1942, from El Paso in the far west of the state, congratulating him on his campaign against O'Daniel, he made it clear what section of the state he blamed for O'Daniel's success.⁵¹ Lea wrote:

There are so many blanks in Texas that they overshadow the people who think and who love their state. I hope the roads are impassable in East Texas next Saturday . . . Texas, as you say, will be eternally disgraced, but you have done your best.⁵²

O'Daniel's image was an anathema to those like Dobie and Lea who saw in the politician's attempts to construct himself as a man of the Texas people all that was corrupt, weak, stupid and Southern in Texas society. It was also unrepresentative of the Texas that Dobie believed he belonged to and nurtured and sought to promote. The image of Texas maleness that Dobie favoured was not tied to a farm or a plough. Instead, the manner of manhood that Dobie offered his readers can be found in Dobie's construction of the story of John D. Young, *A Vaquero of the Brush Country*. Dobie met Young in Alpine, Texas, in 1911 and saw the reminiscences of the old-time cowboy, the vaquero, as ideal material on which to base his construction of Texas manhood. He quickly separated the status of the cowboy from the rest of the human herd, arguing that:

No genuine cowboy ever suffered from an inferiority complex or ranked himself in the 'laboring class' along with 'clodhoppers' and ditch diggers. He

considered himself a cavalier in the full sense of that word - a gentleman on horse, privileged to come it proud over all nesters, squatters, Kansas jay-hawkers, and other such earth-clinging creatures.⁵³

The ideal Texas male, as constructed by Dobie, was, essentially, an individual and was not party to the kind of radio-induced, collective brainwashing that saw O'Daniel elected to office. It did little for the image of the Texas that Dobie championed that a man such as O'Daniel, with a following among the mass of downtrodden sodbusters, could be governor of Texas and later represent the state in Washington.

Neither did Dobie express any admiration for those in Texas society who displayed their independence and character in the pursuit of profit. His direct involvement in the Rainey Controversy at the University of Texas led him to perceive the influence of capital as being corrupt and detrimental to the furtherance of intellectual achievement. He wrote in 1947:

Under the conditions of this tranquillity the faculty is free to count fruit flies, to publish statistics on the oil content of peanuts, to unwrap the swathings around Egyptian mummies -- but not to unswathe the bindings that corporate enterprise tightens tighter and tighter around intellectual enterprise or to assay the oil content of certain American senators.⁵⁴

For Dobie, the Texas Establishment represented the crassest form of individualism. Writing from Austin, Texas on his return from England in 1945, Dobie expressed his admiration for English culture and his disillusionment with the influence of key aspects of American culture in the following manner:

Under bombs both piloted and pilotless I have felt more serene than I can feel under the everlasting bombing by American avarice wanting to sell me not only goods but a dependence upon goods and calling its business 'service,' seeking to hinder the spread of truth and the play of ideas and calling its conduct 'free enterprise.'⁵⁵

Exposure to the complexities of English culture had sharpened Dobie's antipathy toward those in Texas who were determined to gear the culture of his home state, as well as its image, toward a celebration of the pursuit of profit. Dobie was seduced by English conservatism. He chose to believe that despite the obvious stratification of English society, the manner of conservatism to be found there represented an antidote to the radicals on both left and right. He wrote: 'Conservatism is not necessarily reactionary. It may be quite the contrary, though this truism is constantly forgotten by zealous progressives.'⁵⁶

By the mid-1940s, the image of the Texas millionaire was a stock character in American popular culture. The MGM film of 1940, *Boom Town*, with Clark Gable, at the peak of his popularity, playing the imposing and adventurous Texas capitalist wheeler-dealer, Big John McMasters, was an example of the strength of the male image in this version of Texas maleness. The climax of the film shows McMasters in court fighting for, and winning, his freedom to contravene the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. In the process, the idea of Texas maleness as a corrupt but attractive arm of American capitalism was confirmed to a mass cinema audience. It was also a challenge to the image of Texas and its manhood favoured by Dobie. 'Freedom,' Dobie wrote, 'depends also on the absence of propaganda and other forms of controls

that big business in America has come to exercise on all mediums of expression – an unannounced but pervasive fascism.⁵⁷ Dobie believed that it was not only freedom that was under threat, but also the dominance of the image of white Texas masculinity, as he constructed it, that was in danger of losing its place as the pre-eminent Texas icon. Much of Dobie's struggle against the excesses of corporate capitalism and the brutal conservatism of Texas politics stemmed from his fear that its ethos and its acceptable face, most notably in the irresistible form of Clark Gable, would contaminate the free-riding image of the Texas cowboy.

Two other key factors compounded Dobie's rejection of the image and policies of O'Daniel and his backers in the Texas Establishment. One was his rejection of Texas as part of the South and the idea that racial bigotry and segregation were an integral part of Texas life. The other was his dismissive attitude toward the God-fearing in Texas.

O'Daniel represented a deep seam of official racism in Texas society. He was a promoter of the ultra-conservative group, The Texas Regulars, part of whose platform called for 'Restoration of the supremacy of the white race, which has been destroyed by the Communist-controlled New Deal.'⁵⁸ Dobie, by the time of his opposition to the Texas Establishment in the 1940s, was a confirmed desegregationist. However, his fervour for racial equality was not obvious in his work. The scant interest he showed in non-white Texans in his writing placed other races in the background and, therefore, as in social reality, in a position of impotence and disadvantage. This, of course, is not to be excused, but when placed alongside the overt and bitter racism of some of his contemporaries it strikes the reader as deliberately contained. Dobie grew up in a society that experienced some of the most horrendous racial violence ever experienced in America. It seems inconceivable that he would not have been aware

of the commonplace murder of Mexicans in Texas during the period of the 'Brown Scare' between the years 1915 to 1917. The large number of Mexicans arriving in the state at this time, and the reaction of white Texans to them, created a situation in Texas where, according to Rodolfo Acuna, 'the number of Chicanos killed by Rangers, local authorities, and vigilantes climbed into the thousands.'⁵⁹ This, as well as the everyday racism that permeated Texas society throughout the course of Dobie's life, makes it unlikely that the young Dobie, armed with an inquisitive nature and a natural interest in the relationship between Texas and Mexico, would not be acutely aware of the brutal reality of racism in Texas. The romantic view taken by Dobie of the conflict on the Texas/Mexican border served to soften the vicious reality of the situation. In 1944 he wrote: 'Sir Walter Scott's *Rob Roy* remains the most revealing commentary on the Texas-Mexico border I have ever found . . . Bruce and Wallace . . . will be my heroes as long as I draw breath.'⁶⁰ This retreat from the actuality of Texas society into the world of his childhood reading is indicative of Dobie's refusal to deal effectively with the negativity of male-dominated white Texas society.

The politicians Dobie did admire were those whom he saw as having an understanding of and connection to the land, irrespective of whether this translated into a meaningful appreciation of the needs of those who lived there. For many years, despite their political differences, Dobie tried to maintain a relationship with J. Evetts Haley. The connection between the men stemmed from their common understanding and literary construction of the kind of men who lived and worked in the Texas cattle industry. Haley wrote to Dobie on the occasion of the former's dismissal from the University of Texas in 1936, the tone of his letter indicating considerable common ground between the two men. Haley thanked Dobie and told him that his support was 'characteristic of your whole-souled nature and traditions of our people.'⁶¹ In the

1950s, Dobie tried to find common ground with his friend. The areas of compatibility between the two, based on a cattleman's love of the land and respect for the image of the men who worked it, were strong, but not strong enough to weather their fundamental political dissimilarity. It was, however, the ever-bitter and unrelenting Haley who was instrumental in ending their friendship. By 1962, after almost a quarter of a century of bitter political differences between them, Haley described his former colleague as 'a liar and supporter of subversive organisations.'⁶² To Dobie, however, Haley, despite his extremist political views, was still worthy of admiration simply because of his status as a Texas man of the land.

In a 1958 letter to John Nance 'Cactus Jack' Garner, congratulating the ex-Vice President of the United States on his ninetieth birthday, Dobie wrote:

I appreciate especially your naturalness as man and statesman and also with the land to which you belong. The name 'Cactus Jack' is in recognition of that naturalness. Your name connotes pecans as well as prickly pear, along with deer javelinas, grass, camps out in the brush, and congeniality with hombres del campo.⁶³

Dobie's accolade to Garner, a reluctant New Dealer whose 1932 campaign to be nominated for the Presidency was backed by William Randolph Hearst and who had been described by union leader John L. Lewis as a 'labor-bating, poker-playing, whisky-drinking, evil old man,' tells us much about what, and whom, Dobie saw as the essence of Texas maleness.⁶⁴ Dobie is most commonly described as a liberal Democrat and, if we accept this description, then Garner represented his political antithesis. Nonetheless, Dobie saw in his fellow Texan a native quality based on an

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understanding of the land that transcended political considerations. This allowed Dobie to put Garner's politics to one side and hail him as a kindred Texas-male spirit.

Dobie's aim was to record the folklore of white Texas and to construct a masculine icon that would adequately convey the historical achievements of white Texans. In doing so, he perpetuated the supreme status of white men in the institutionally racist society in which he lived. The impact and dangers of this became clearer to Dobie as his life progressed. He did, however, even after he became an outspoken critic of racial segregation, remain a key contributor to the kind of mythology that helped to maintain the racial status quo in both wider society and in popular culture. His tendency as a scholar and writer to deal with non-whites in a perfunctory fashion was picked up by at least one critic, who wrote in a review of *Guide to the Life and Literature of the Southwest*: 'One might add that Mr Dobie tends to see Texas as the Southwest and the Texas cattlemen as the typical Southwesterner that he passed too quickly over the Southwestern Indian . . .'⁶⁵

Dobie was not cursed with a lifetime legacy of Southern racial bitterness and this may explain why his writing displayed little in the way of overt and deliberate racism. His sense of racial supremacy was inbred and subliminal, and unrelated to a lifelong and unswerving adherence to the Confederate legacy. He maintained a distance from the idea of Texas as part of the Old South. As an example of this, he wrote to liberal Democrat politician Ralph Yarborough in 1957 expressing his feelings on the association of the Texas that he knew and understood and Southern politics and racial beliefs:

It is, I think, a passing whim that Texas is now lumped in some quarters with the Old South on the segregation question. Only a section of Texas has ever

been Old South. More of it belongs to the West and the Midwest than to the South. I think I have a right to some opinion on this subject. I think if you throw in with the Old South reactionaries on the race question you will be going against the tides of history.⁶⁶

Dobie also wrote to his friend Tom Lea in 1946 on the subject of racial segregation at the University of Texas:

All Negroes are barred; there is no Negro university with any respectable courses in any higher branch of learning. There is not going to be. By God, we are no better toward the Negroes than we were before we were forced by arms to free them as slaves. The injustice of it makes my blood boil sometimes.⁶⁷

Even though Dobie judged that the racism of the Texas Establishment was too blunt and destructive, in his work he ignored the presence of non-whites in Texas, understated it, or else patronised the groups concerned. On the loyalty of the Mexican ranch hand, for example, he wrote that: 'For uncomplaining loyalty, he is probably an equal to the 'befo da wah' darky and as trustworthy.'⁶⁸

He did, however, readily acknowledge the disadvantages for Mexicans and Negroes in a white-dominated society. His analysis of the prejudice against Mexicans explained it very largely in terms of the ongoing bitterness caused by the border feuds that were an ever-present feature of Texas life in the nineteenth century. There was also recognition of the fact that Negroes played a role in the cattle industry. That said, the anecdotes surrounding Negro cowboys were most often light and dismissive and did not imply any kind of influential presence on the part of the latter. The most

derogative example of Dobie's attitude toward Negroes was best illustrated in the story he told of Billy the Kid's first killing. Dobie wrote:

One day when a negro [sic] soldier bleated at Billy, Billy threw a rock at his tormentor. The negro went for a gun and so did Billy. As a result there was one less negro for the government to support.⁶⁹

This is about as bad as it got in Dobie's work. He accorded black cowboys such as Morris Mack and Henry Beckwith a degree of respect that fitted with their role as working cowhands.⁷⁰ Although he clearly favoured the status quo associated with white supremacy in Texas, and created a whole selection of new myths out of old ones, there was little of the rabid racial bias evident in the work of Haley or Webb.

In the days of Texas braggadocio in the 1920s and 1930s, when Dobie, according to Francis Edward Abernethy, was 'a lion in his own forest,' he saw fit publicly to proclaim the case of the Texas male hero at every possible opportunity.⁷¹ As the 1940s progressed, Dobie, shaken by the impact of contemporary politics on his view of Texas, grew increasingly embarrassed at the parochial nature of his initial worldview. He wrote:

During the period when I was preaching the gospel of the right of the people to its 'cultural inheritance,' I must have neglected considerably the liberation of minds. Now when I regard the writings of . . . a good many of the publishings of the regional presses, I am aware of a great deal of tawdriness and paltriness and meaninglessness in this 'cultural inheritance.'⁷²

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In its place Dobie increasingly found solace in liberal dissent. He gained satisfaction from his rejection of the beliefs that maintained the ideological base of Texas society.

One such pillar of the Texas hegemony was religion. In the following extract from a letter written to his friend Roy Bedicheck in 1946, Dobie not only savaged a branch of Christianity, he also threw his weight behind the Soviet Union, a country that represented the antithesis of all that the Texas Establishment stood for. Dobie wrote:

I am still sympathetic with Russia. Every time she brings a Catholic country into her sphere, she has broken an iron band around the minds of a nationality of people, even though they don't have freedom of speech and freedom of the press after they get in her sphere. She is in a state of becoming, and I am confident that millions liberated from priest domination will in time become free to think and say what they will. If it comes to lining up with Franco and the Vatican against Russia, I am out.⁷³

Dobie's pro-Russian sentiment, at this delicate time in relations between the U.S.S.R and the U.S.A., is an indication of just how far he was prepared to go to distance himself from the American mainstream.

It was not only Catholicism that Dobie railed against. One organ of the Texas Establishment, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, censored a section of his weekly column in 1958. The editor objected to Dobie's use of the phrase 'some Billy Graham form of charlatan,' and to the following passage – which was typical of Dobie's disrespect for the grip that organised religion had on Texas – in which he told his readers: 'Bill, so Ed Wallace says, continued a wholesome unconcern for his soul until the day of his death. He was proud of being able to look any real man or any

soul-saver in the eye and tell him to go to hell.’ Dobie wrote to the editor with the following response: ‘This kind of censorship, preventing a man from expressing a mature thought, cutting him down to the size of some church-school kindergarten is not expressive of a first class newspaper.’⁷⁴ A rejection of religion, therefore, as with racism, formed part of Dobie’s attempts to provide an alternative to the ever-growing and pervasive influence of the Establishment.

In the 1940s, Dobie fought an increasingly forlorn fight against what he believed to be political censorship imposed on him by the Texas Establishment press. Harry Withers, the managing editor of the *Dallas Morning News*, wrote to Dobie setting out his paper’s position with regard to his work: ‘We wish to discontinue the agreement by which you furnish your article for publication in the News . . . our decision is based upon your persistence in weaving into your stories political observations.’⁷⁵ Dobie initially refused to bow to the wishes of the *News*, but subsequently wrote to Withers confirming that he would in future eschew politics and stick to folklore.⁷⁶

At the same time as he was attacking, or at least challenging, the central props of the Texas Establishment, he also sought comfort in the incorruptibility and worth of the animals of the plains, especially the longhorns and the mustangs that had, in his estimation, given as much strength and dignity to the image of Texas as mankind – especially those members of mankind who, in Dobie’s estimation, had been corrupted by God and greed. Dobie increasingly used the symbolism of these animals as an analogy for the freedom that he believed Texas maleness was in danger of losing as extreme right-wing conservatism gained even more ground in Texas society.

In an interview given in 1964, Dobie recalled the motivation behind his 1952 book, *The Mustangs*, writing of himself in the third person that ‘[Dobie] was writing about mustangs during the McCarthy ascendancy: ‘he put in for freedom for humans as

well as horses.’ The stance of the Texas Establishment when *The Mustangs* was first published was vehemently pro-McCarthy. John Bainbridge described the political mood of the state in the early 1950s as follows:

The Texas businessmen bought the whole McCarthy package . . . In the days when McCarthy was their anti-communist candy kid, Texans not only helped him out financially in a substantial way but showered him with other tokens of esteem: a six thousand dollar cadillac sedan as a wedding present; a scroll signed by Gov Shivers proclaiming that ‘Joe McCarthy - a real American - is now officially a Texan’.⁷⁷

The Mustangs (1952) set out Dobie’s beliefs at a time when Texas was in the grip of McCarthyism. He wrote of the horses themselves that:

Their essence was the spirit of freedom. Writing about them at a time when so many proclaimers of liberty are strangling it, I have desired a book that . . . would express a ‘pard-like’ spirit.⁷⁸

Descriptions of animals in Dobie’s work supplemented human Texas maleness as a key symbol of the state’s strength and freedom. They also represented a link with an earlier period when the glory of Texas was in full flower. He wrote:

The Longhorn is of the past . . . a past so remote and irrevocable that sometimes it seems as if it might never have been . . . They possessed an adamantine strength, an aboriginal vitality, a Spartan endurance, and a fierce nobility . . .⁷⁹

Animals were also used to make the bluntest of political points. In *Rattlesnakes*, Dobie made another dig at those in control of the political process in Texas by addressing the snake with the following message:

Fellow citizen, you belong to the ground; you have never pretended to belong anywhere-else. You can be trusted to fang your prey and kill it with poison. You can also be trusted not to lie. I prefer being in your company to being in that of the governor of the state of Texas.⁸⁰

The oppressive political atmosphere of Texas in the two decades following the end of World War Two should not be underestimated. Dobie was so inhibited by the socio-political mood of Cold War America that it played heavily on his ability to write freely. In a letter to Tom Lea describing how his work was being curtailed, Dobie commented that:

The distrust of questioners and rebels was never so low in American life as it is now, I reckon. A clerk in Washington can't express distrust of Chiang Kai-Shek without becoming liable to the charge of being subversive and losing her job. Indignation against this business smoulders in me day and night and keeps me from being free to tell the stories with which I am at home and at ease.⁸¹

This letter tells us in plain terms of Dobie's concerns regarding the contemporary political mood and its effect on his writing.

His output following the end of his academic career at the University of Texas

commenced with *The Voice of the Coyote* (1949) and *The Ben Lilly Legend* (1950). The latter book told the story of Lilly, a hunter extraordinaire, who spent a lifetime killing animals and living the kind of unhindered life that Dobie admired. Dobie had originally pursued the construction of an image of Texas maleness because of his admiration for the men who had displayed an affinity with the ways of the land. He deeply resented the appropriation of the Texas male image by those engaged with the corrupt and cut-throat city-based world of conservative Texas politics and capital. When this happened, Dobie looked back to the land to find the essential strength of Texas.

Dobie turned away from a full concentration on the stereotyped male image of Texas and the essence of Dobie can be found in his reasons for doing so. Of course, Dobie's output in the 1940s and beyond was not exclusively focussed on animals and their socio-political relevance. *The Ben Lilly Legend* (1950), *Up the Trail From Texas* (1955) and *Cow People* (1964) all honour the lives and purpose of white Texas men. These characters – who can be counted in the hundreds in *Cow People* alone – were described by Dobie as 'old-time men of the soil and the saddle.'⁸² Even books such as *The Longhorns*, *The Mustangs* and *Rattlesnakes* whose titles would suggest an overwhelming emphasis on the eponymous subjects, focussed as much on the behaviour and character of men as on beasts. In *The Longhorns*, for example, Texas maleness is honed and celebrated through a myriad of characters, including Charles Goodnight, John Chisum, and the Blocker brothers. In one passage, where Bill Blocker described his feelings regarding a wild steer he found on the trail, the relevance of animals in Dobie's construction of Texas maleness becomes clear. Blocker, as Dobie told it, said of the steer: 'He looked so proud and free that he reminded me of the way I felt.'⁸³ This was exactly the kind of emotional attachment

to his personal notion of freedom that Dobie sought from his Texas men.

Dobie and the Hollywood Image of Texas Men

The spat with Coppini was a confirmation of Dobie's engagement with the image of Texas and its male heroes. He was aware that the image of the state was open to interpretation and abuse from those who did not share his views. If an effete Italian sculptor could so manipulate the image of the state away from what Dobie saw as its core strengths, then others with more sinister, commercial, or flippant agendas could do the same. It was Dobie's abiding desire to husband the image of white Texas maleness in a manner that accentuated the essential ruggedness of men when they connect with the land. This made him naturally hostile to the image offered by those who looked at Texas in other ways.

After watching the 1938 movie, *The Texans*, in a Californian picture-house, Dobie wrote to Walter Prescott Webb expressing his view on the screen image of the state as offered in this movie.⁸⁴ The film was based on the Emerson Hough story, *North of '36*, which Dobie admired greatly, and this may have influenced the tone of his review. He wrote with a mix of humour, annoyance and a degree of racial bitterness, of the differing priorities of himself, the Californian audience and the film-makers:

In addition to having five covered wagons with about 135 head of mixed Brahama and white-face yearlings to represent a herd of 'ten thousand longhorns' – imagine the absurdity of a herd that size – an East Side Jew came out with sheep skin leggings on and directed cowgirl singing and dancing. I kept trying to read the brand on the cattle, for the picture was made on Mrs

Burke's old ranch and the cattle were, I know, branded DA . . . The public is not interested in cattle. The leggings on the Dago made all the cowboy it wants. A symbol is enough for it, like the steer heads on the belt buckles sold in Hollywood and for most of the public the symbol is without concrete connotation.⁸⁵

On every level, even when discussing the basic minutiae of the film, Dobie's concern was centred on his desire for his version of authenticity. He despaired that the sanctity of Texas masculinity had been breached by the film-maker's insistence on bland symbolism. His most acute frustration, however, stemmed from the attempts to personify the Texas cowboy. Dobie's animosity toward the image offered by Hollywood can be seen in his chagrin that what he described as an 'East Side Jew' or 'Dago' could represent the most obvious example of the symbolic strength of white Texas society. His use of language, at the very least, indicates that he was clearly uncomfortable with the prospect of a Texas icon being played by an actor who did not fully correspond to the white ideal. Dobie was to emerge in the 1940s and 1950s as a champion of racial integration in Texas. Despite this, he was prepared to voice his disapproval in racially offensive terms at what, in reality, amounted to a minor section in a minor movie.

Beyond the issue of cheap imagery, it could be argued that the reason why Dobie was so offended by the film was that it riled his Southern blood, or, perhaps, his sense of dignity as a historian. *The Texans* attempted to place Hough's story in a broad historical context. The prologue of the film explained that 'The South was ruled as a conquered enemy. Northern politicians ruled in an orgy of power – of plunder by organised mobs – of tribute and tyranny and death.' Like George Marshall's *Texas*,

which followed in 1941, Hogan's film set up ex-Confederates as both victims and heroes. The film's lack of subtlety extends to a display of drunken Northern black soldiers abusing Confederate veterans and, although it ends in a display of reconciliation, it is difficult to ignore the film's initial anti-North and anti-black sentiments. Dobie does not relate his feelings on the specific historical emphasis of the film in his letter to Webb. However, in Dobie's diatribe on the subject of the film's racial inaccuracies, a clear picture of his priorities with regard to the image of white Texas men in film is displayed.

The emblematic nature of the Hollywood cowboy encouraged Dobie to believe that the image of Texas he had constructed was never going to find an authentic framework in an industry driven by considerations that did not take into account the feelings of a Texas purist. His desire was to maintain, so far as possible, a hold on the image so that the qualities that Dobie admired in Texas masculinity could be pushed to the forefront of the popular consciousness. Dobie, however, understood that the motion picture industry offered little in the way of Texas authenticity and was liable to mould the image to suit its commercial and entertainment needs. In 1955, he wrote of the purpose behind his construction: 'Television, picture shows, and Western fiction have betrayed the cow people by overemphasizing violence. I have tried to bring out the sincerity, decency, and loyalty that went with their work.'⁸⁶ What Dobie saw as the essence of this type of white Texas male was, he believed, missing from popular portrayals. Dobie lamented that the basic human characteristics of these men, the everyday traits and emotions that went to make up the character of the cowman, had been lost in the rush to build a sensational image. In a televised talk in 1964, Dobie outlined his feelings on the inadequacy of the cinematic portrayal of those who worked in the cattle industry, arguing that:

There aren't many good pictures of cowboys and there are fewer good pictures of cowmen, which take the whole man in. I've always heard how generous these cowmen were. You and I were reared with them and some of the stingiest white men that God A-Mighty ever let breathe were cowmen.⁸⁷

By concentrating on the detail of how the cow people were portrayed, Dobie could be accused of missing the bigger social and political repercussions of the manipulation of the image. However, in a letter to his friend Roy Bedicheck, written in 1944, Dobie, in criticising what he saw as the 'metallic and barren' side of the American mentality, associated this directly with American popular culture. He wrote: 'Their minds are puerile, like the funnies, the pictures, and the horseplay humor they feed on.'⁸⁸ This would indicate that Dobie recognised that the failure of the popular image not only impacted on the reputation of cow people, but also on the thought process of those who watched these representations.

Dobie's own work was not used to any great extent in the motion picture industry.⁸⁹ The classic Howard Hawks western *Red River* (1949) opens with the screen filled with a hide-bound volume entitled 'Early Tales of Texas' which some commentators have linked to Dobie's work.⁹⁰ That apart, a direct link between the image constructed by Dobie and the image of Texas on screen is missing. Don B. Graham, however, believes that the work of Dobie was a key factor in making Texas synonymous with a Western ethic, which was popularised in cinema and literature. Graham asserts that 'Along with Walter Prescott Webb, Zane Grey, and a thousand western movies, Dobie helped define Texas to the nation as a western state.'⁹¹ Not only did the public wrongly envisage the whole landscape of Texas as being typically

western, they also associated the ethos of cowboy individualism with the state.

As the Texas of history became what Henry Nash Smith described as an 'icon of conservatism,' those on the liberal side of Texas political thought grew more and more suspicious of the how the image of Texas was presented.⁹² When Dobie was invited to visit the site of the filming of John Wayne's *The Alamo* (1960) in Bracketville, Texas, he was, according to Francis Edward Abernethy:

pained considerably by all the Hollywood phoniness and pretentiousness. He could see too well what the tasteless and lying appeal to what Hollywood had stereotyped as the public taste was doing to a grand and heroic story.⁹³

His lack of faith in Hollywood's wish accurately to represent the Texas male character was an adjunct to his belief that business interests and conservative political elements in Texas had captured the Texas image. Henry Nash Smith absolves Dobie of blame for the development of the image as a conservative mainstay. Smith wrote:

The glamour and nostalgia of this dream of the past have become linked in the public mind with the economic individualism of big business and the hatred of the federal government that is the one unifying emotion of right-wing radicals. Thus according to the stereotypes, Dobie ought to be either a non-political antiquarian or a super-patriot defender of big business. The truth is notoriously otherwise.⁹⁴

Dobie's reputation as a prominent Texas liberal, whose political causes irritated the Texas Establishment for over twenty years, is enough to make him guiltless, in

Smith's estimation, for the drift of the Texas image to the right.

Negative opinions on the image of Texas were not hard to find in the 1940s and '50s. In particular, critics saw the Texas penchant for the past as being unproductive. J. A. Burkhart, a professor at Stephens College, believed that the state 'had not yet reached maturity.' In an article entitled, 'Texas, Land of a Vast Illusion,' Burkhart identified the reasons for this as follows:

The myth of Texanism is employed to prevent the public from realizing how incompatible are simple frontier ideals and philosophy with complex atomic-age circumstances . . . there is a real yearning among Texans to turn the clock back and revert to a simple self-sufficient, non-entangled society.⁹⁵

Although not cited directly in his article, Burkhart probably regarded the image of Texas maleness offered by Dobie as a major contributory factor in keeping the image of Texas firmly rooted in the past. What Dobie constructed was a defence against the inroads of modern life into the freedom of the men of Texas who worked on the land. The most obvious manifestation of this invader was represented by the crass and virulent conservatism of the Texas Establishment. From a period around the late 1930s, Dobie's principal motivation was to assert the essence of Texas freedom without aligning it, in his public's mind, with the ethos of the Texas ruling elite.

Webb, Race, the Rangers and the Image of Texas Maleness

From the early 1930s to his death in 1963, Walter Prescott Webb was a key advocate and promoter of the idea that white Texas masculinity provided the

backbone of Texas society. The natural dynamic in his work arose from the need to underpin the iconic status of the state's white men. As both historian and social commentator, Webb sought to confirm the dominant notion in Texas society that the role of white men had been, was, and would continue to be all-important to the development and well-being of the state. It was his instinctive feeling, a belief he shared with the majority of his generation, that Texas had been built by white men of heroic stature. Webb's image of the best Texas manhood was wholly white and his vision of the western frontier was exclusively male. In his work *The Great Plains* (1931), he stated that the plains 'repelled the women as they attracted the men. There was too much of the unknown, too few of the things they loved.' Much modern work on the history of women in the West, as well as literary representations of women's Western experience, tells a different story.⁹⁶ However, what is important to understand is that Webb, especially in his early academic career, wished that the past, the present and the future of Texas were safe in the hands of the kind of strong, individualistic white men that he himself constructed as his heroes. It also important to appreciate that Webb's view of white Texas masculinity did not remain consistent throughout his academic career and that the changes to his view of Texas and its manhood were not caused by a revision of his perception of the past but, rather, by the impact of the contemporary social and political scene.

Like Dobie, Webb was known as a liberal whose political opinions occasionally clashed with those of the state's ruling elite. It was, therefore, ironic that his construction of the image of white Texas manhood served to bolster the kind of Texas male icon preferred by the conservative forces in Texas society for whom he professed disdain. The men characterised in Webb's work confirmed the idea that there was a natural link between power, or the pursuit of power, and white Texas

masculinity, and that the natural domain of the best and bravest of these men was among those who controlled the political and economic structures of the state.

Webb's men were essentially courageous, capable and individualistic -- all of the qualities that the state's power elite wished to be associated with. The male characters in Webb's work also served to confirm that the rightful place of exceptional white men was at the apex of the state's racial pyramid. As a result, Webb, like Dobie, whether consciously or not, was as much a contributing and integral part of the state's Establishment as the conservative politicians and social commentators whom they criticised.

Webb's historical work during this time covered a range of subjects and disciplines. His first substantial piece of work, *The Great Plains* (1931), was an adaptation of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis. *Divided We Stand: The Crisis of a Frontierless Democracy* (1937) described the domination of the American economy by Northern capitalism and the resultant economic difficulties experienced by the South and West. *The Great Frontier* (1952) looked at the growth of European and American civilisation and argued that, with the end of the frontier, the forces of state socialism or corporate capitalism would increasingly administer the resources of the world. All of these books show that Webb, in common with J. Evetts Haley and J. Frank Dobie, was greatly influenced in his view of Texas and its manhood by his interpretation of how Texas and the South were coping with the vagaries of contemporary politics, society and economic change. The Webb book that is of most interest here, however, is *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (1935). This book looks directly at one of the most important iconographic and controversial sections of white Texas masculinity. Its significance in emphasising the series of myths that surround the Texas Rangers, as well as

Webb's own assessment of the societal role of these men, should not be underestimated.

The role of the Texas Rangers in the construction of the popular perception of Texas masculinity was substantial. The force, founded in 1823 to protect white settlers in the Southwest, became, as early as 1856, with A.W. Arrington's *The Rangers and Regulators*, an important example of Western iconography. As a symbol of white American supremacy over the Mexican, the Indian and the frontier, the place of the Rangers was assured. Hollywood understood the significance of the Texas Rangers in American life. This can be seen in the fact that, during the years from 1942 to 1945, when the U. S. was embroiled in war, at least 34 movies featuring the Rangers were produced in America.

Arguably the most enduring of the characterisations of the Rangers began in Detroit in 1933 when George Trendle created for radio station WXYZ the series entitled *The Lone Ranger*. The principal character starred in more than 3,000 radio episodes, two movie serials, three feature movies, 18 novels, more than 220 television episodes, and uncounted newspaper comic strips and cartoons. For four decades, the Lone Ranger represented a culturally safe personification of Texas manhood. Millions of boys applied to sign up as deputies and made the following promise:

Always to tell the truth. To obey my parent or guardian. To study hard at school. Always to play fair. To be kind to birds and animals. To be careful when crossing the streets. Not to hitch-hike or hang on behind autos. Not to play in the streets. To eat 3 square meals each day, including a good breakfast. To help my country in every way I can.⁹⁷

The perception of Texas and of its law officers in the hearts and minds of American men and boys for generations to come was based on the exploits and the characteristics of the 'masked man' and what he represented.

What Webb contributed to this popular phenomenon was academic credibility. His work offered confirmation to the Texas Establishment, at a key moment in Texas history when the state was preparing to celebrate its centenary, that they were the inheritors of a male tradition that was not simply the preserve of the movies, the radio or the dime-novel, but had a sound and celebrated base in historical reality.

Webb was born in 1888 in a section of east Texas named Panola County, which is tucked in hard against the Louisiana state line. His family was from Mississippi, from where his grandfather set out to fight for the Confederacy during the Civil War. The Webb family was part of the significant influx into Texas from the Southern states in the last third of the nineteenth century. Many of these people were described as 'the ruined whites from the older South.'⁹⁸ Given the socio-economic condition of the Webb family, this description adequately describes their situation. Webb was raised near the West Texas town of Ranger, and grew up deeply influenced by the geographical landscape of this environment, the difficult economic realities, as well as his family's attachment to their Southern past. His father manufactured a living on the edge of the frontier out of a combination of part-time farming and teaching. As an indication of how this Southern heritage influenced his formative years, the young Webb read and corresponded with a literary magazine, published in Atlanta, called *The Sunny South*. The focus of the magazine was based around Southern history, offering an insight into the mindset of minor writers whose work centred on a romantic past and failed to engage with the difficult contemporary reality of Southern life. The weight of Southern history played so heavily on Webb that he decided early

in his career that he would avoid the subject of the Civil War because he felt unable to keep the necessary objectivity between himself and his subject. In 1956 he wrote:

Though the South is not my bailiwick, my roots are in it, and I think I turned to the West and the frontier to get away from the bitterness engendered by memory and a knowledge of history.⁹⁹

This residual emotional attachment to the South impelled him, in 1937, to produce the work *Divided We Stand: The Crisis of a Frontier Democracy*. The book presented a catalogue of bitter recrimination surrounding what Webb saw as the unfair treatment handed out to the South in the Depression years, primarily through the machinations of Northern-controlled financial institutions. The South, in Webb's eyes, was disabled economically by the practise of corporations of stripping the region of its wealth and power to the sole advantage of the North. Essentially, however, most of Webb's writings on the South were designed to engender confidence in the ability of those in the region, free of the burden of the past, to take control of their own economic destiny. More than twenty years after the publication of *Divided We Stand*, Webb declared that:

The story I am going to tell differs from much that is said and written about the South because this is a story of cheerfulness, of optimism and of hope, a story calculated to lift the spirit, turn the eyes of the southerner from the grim past where they have too long lingered to a future so bright as to be to some all but unbelievable.¹⁰⁰

In both tone and sentiment, *Divided We Stand* represented a classic remnant of the political activism of the 1880s and 1890s which focused white Texas bitterness against the most obvious and legitimate target in view, namely, Northern-controlled capitalist interests. Webb was thoroughly anti-big business, which he saw as being outside of the control of the people of the South, and insisted always on placing emphasis on a man's personal worth and character, irrespective of social or economic status.

It should be understood that it was not the capitalist system itself that Webb railed against. Rather it was the lack of Southern control over the system that so enraged him. He cited the case of a pair of young entrepreneurs from Santa Anna, Texas, whose milk bottle venture was ruined by a Northern-controlled monopoly. Webb saw the fate of these two businessmen as symptomatic of what was happening to the South in general.¹⁰¹ It tells us much about Webb's social and sectional perspective that he saw the ills of Texas encapsulated in the fate of two men who had embarked on what always promised to be a risky business venture. He ignored the contemporary problems of millions of his fellows Texans on the breadline, and thousands more who were fighting Texas-controlled industries for the right to a decent wage and conditions. Texas capital in the 1930s had already established a deserved reputation for protecting itself from any potential threat to its power base and no lessons on the harsh realities of corporate capitalism were necessary for the increasingly effective and high-flying Texas millionaires and their managers. The reality of Southern capitalist, hard-edged, profit-making competence was, therefore, a major feature of Texas life when Webb was bemoaning a lack of local control in Texas economics.

Criticism of this visible and influential social group, all of whom were white Texas males, would have necessitated an attack on the foundations of white society. Such

condemnation was not part of Webb's agenda. Reportage of the struggle of white Texan against white Texan on the basis of class, either in a historical or contemporary context, was never Webb's priority. His dedication to promoting a oneness of purpose and outlook, exemplified by the individualism of the Texas Rangers, would certainly have been lessened by this kind of social infighting. In *The Texas Rangers*, for instance, Webb could have chosen to question the role of the force in important white-on-white industrial clashes such as the Great Southwest Strike of 1886 or, indeed, any of the many industrial disputes that took place in Texas, especially during the turbulent 1880s. In the chapter that covers this period, 'The Closed Frontier,' Webb bemoans the absence of real adventure and lists the function of the force as follows: 'hunting cow or horse thieves, protecting negroes [sic] from mobs, aiding judges in holding court, "laying on fences" to capture wire-cutters, or fighting Mexicans along the border.'¹⁰² No mention here of the activities of the Rangers against the Farmer's Alliance or the Knights of Labor, both of which had many thousands of members in Texas during this time.

An article in the conservative *American Mercury* in 1936 outlined the point being made in the 1930s that the change of role of the Rangers away from the subjugation of ethnic minorities toward a broader societal function was behind a loss of esteem among white Texans. The article explained:

As the Rangers began to operate less against Indians and Mexicans and more against members of their own race, they lost some of their popularity ... as the Rangers recent activities have been confined largely to quelling strike disorders and raiding night clubs, there is little incentive for men of the old type to enlist.¹⁰³

The suggestion here is clear: that white-on-white societal control is a less appealing prospect for the best of white Texas masculinity to engage in than action aimed at maintaining the 'whiteness' of Texas society.

Webb's failure to engage with this aspect of the Rangers suggests that his voice on hard-edged social issues was, therefore, like his voice on similarly contentious historical matters, thoroughly muted. Rather than looking internally for the ills that continued to blight Texas society, Webb, like many in the state, found satisfaction in the old excuses, that it is the supposed moral weakness, corruption and vicious nature of those in the North who since the Civil War had been identified as the natural enemy.

As lawmen, the Rangers were an integral part of Texas society and the essence of their role was to protect that society against those deemed to threaten the developing order. Webb's personal understanding of the Rangers stemmed from his upbringing in his hometown of Ranger where, during the oil-boom years, law and order was disrupted and the Texas Rangers came to 'restore local government to the demoralized citizens.' Therefore, when Webb talks of the fact that he 'knew the kind of society they represented and defended,' he is speaking, in part, from the narrow perspective of personal experience.¹⁰⁴ In a broader sense, the period of the 1870s and 1880s was at the root of the lasting schism in Texas male society between those who were beginning to acquire power and influence and those who had none. Webb showed, by placing his faith in the Rangers and by ignoring the deep social divisions that were evident in white society, which side of that particular divide he was on.

Webb and his Rangers as Part of the Establishment

Webb's book on the Texas Rangers contains further evidence of his contempt for the behaviour of Northern-controlled corporate capital. In sections of the book, most notably those surrounding the role of Captain Frank Hamer in the 1930s, Webb places his admiration for the manner of maleness demonstrated by the Rangers in a context that takes into account his deep feelings with regard to the historical and socio-economic wrongs that, he believed, had been perpetrated against the South. Webb's admiration for the Texas Rangers was primarily based on the way that they conducted themselves as men in the face of danger. In 1926 he described the Rangers as 'the bravest single group of men that America has yet produced.'¹⁰⁵ The very nature of this danger was generated by the situations in which they found themselves. These were, of course, determined by their role as official and willing protectors of white Texas society and all that society and its institutions stood for. It was impossible, therefore, to separate respect for the way the Rangers behaved as individuals from their profound societal involvement. The behaviour of the Rangers was such that it attracted criticism from many areas of Texas society. Without the involvement of law enforcement agencies, violent anarchy could have become the norm in areas of nineteenth-century Texas. Law enforcement was, therefore, crucial if any manner of stable society was to emerge in Texas. However, law enforcement was also totally dominated by the socio-economic and racial mores of white Texans and, in this light, Webb's positive and exaggerated characterisation of the Texas Rangers smacks of a deliberate intention not only to celebrate the men of the Rangers, but also to honour the societal role of these men and those who controlled them.

However, when the weight of evidence against the Rangers and their role in corruption was confirmed by a legislative investigation in 1919, Webb found reasons

to defend the integrity of the force, but not of the political figures that, in Webb's estimation, were really at fault. With regard to their misdemeanours along the Rio Grande Valley in the years around the time of the First World War, Webb pointed to the enforced enlistment of 'inexperienced and incompetent' officers as an explanation.¹⁰⁶ The distinction he made between the essential integrity of the men of the Rangers and the weakness of their political masters held the key to his disillusion with the state's ruling elite. Of course, in the eyes of the Mexican population of that region, the Texas Rangers had always been guilty of much more than a lack of experience or incompetence.

Since their formation, therefore, the Rangers have represented a loyal and protective arm of white Texas society. From their nineteenth-century struggles with Indians, Mexicans and outlaws through to their use in the 1950s as a tool of the Texas Establishment in its efforts to maintain racial segregation, as well as their role in the 1960s and 1970s as intimidators of the Chicano labour movement, the Rangers have consistently played a key role in upholding the rule of the state's power elite.¹⁰⁷ As such, they have become largely synonymous with the Texas power structure. This, in turn, means that any attack on the character of the Rangers could be construed as an attack on the Establishment. Conservative Texas historians, politicians and writers, therefore, have consistently defended the Rangers against criticism. For example, their reputation for toughness and brutality, developed through a series of nineteenth-century conflicts with Indians and Mexicans, led historian T. R. Fehrenbach to justify the reputation of the Rangers for cruelty and violence in the following manner:

The Texas border breed had no real taint of cruelty; human torture for its own sake or any sake was an abomination to the Anglo-Celt . . . the Texans learned

that they could not surrender with war honors to either side. This attribute of Indian warfare was already known . . . Mexicans, out of their revolutionary brutalizations, also abused, tortured and shot a significant percentage of all their captives ... Texans ... adapted their warfare to reply in kind.¹⁰⁸

It is indicative of the position in Texas society of the Texas Rangers, and of the role of conservative historians, that Fehrenbach would seek to justify the excesses of the Rangers by placing blame at the feet of those outside of the racial criteria necessary for inclusion in the Texas elite. Fehrenbach's take on society can be gauged by his position regarding the victims of the violence of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s. Of the summary justice inflicted on the communities of East Texas, Fehrenbach wrote: 'The effect on society was not very great. Those punished invariably came from the lowest dregs – waitresses, prostitutes, drifters, Negroes, Mexicans, halfwits.'¹⁰⁹

The same bias and prejudice can also be laid at the door of Texas politicians. As lawmen, the Rangers were an integral part of Texas society and the essence of their role was to protect society against those deemed to be a threat to the developing order. Lyndon Baines Johnson, himself a personification of the association of Texas manhood with the state's ruling elite, confirmed – in the introduction to the 1965 reprint of Webb's book – the societal significance of the Rangers. Johnson wrote:

The never-ending quest for an orderly, secure, but open and free society always demands dedicated men. The Rangers - and Dr Webb himself - were just such men. Their influence was worked not by recklessness or foolhardiness, but by the steadiness of their purpose and performance - and by the sureness, among both the law-abiding and the law-breaking, that

thought of self would never deter the Ranger from fulfilling the commitment of his vows as an agent of law, order and justice.¹¹⁰

Johnson, in this embrace of Webb and the Texas Rangers, chose to eulogise two key parts of the Texas Establishment: the law enforcers and Webb himself, an important representative of the historians who contributed to their iconographic status.

Webb's approach to the history of the Rangers in his book was to run chronologically through the leaders of the force. This took him from the earliest Rangers, who fought frontier and border engagements against Mexicans and Indians, up to and including the Rangers of the twentieth century whose role was to combat crime. Inevitably, with the glorification of contemporary figures, Webb ran the risk of political controversy. Dobie could write all he wanted about the mores of the nineteenth-century cowboy and then wrap it up in excuses centring on time and place. Webb, on the other hand, chose, in the latter part of his book, to deal with living characters still active in the state. The veneration of Texas masculinity from a time when, it could be argued, the very existence of the white Texas community was at risk, was different from the later reverence accorded to living figures whose motivation, and that of their political masters, stemmed from a different source.

It is true that Webb's unending glorification of the Rangers limits the usefulness of his book for historical purposes. Just one example of the many instances of the praise heaped upon the Rangers reads as follows:

To speak of courage among the Texas Rangers is almost a superfluity ... The main requisite of the Ranger captain is intelligence. He is all mind, and his mind works, not only in emergencies, but ahead of them; he anticipates the

contingency and is prepared for it.¹¹¹

However, in relation to the specific requirements of this thesis, Webb's exaggerated deification of this high-profile section of Texas manhood as well as his criticism of the Texas Establishment provides a useful basis for analysis. Criticism of the actions of the Rangers *can* be found within Webb's book, but it is subdued and focuses on wayward individuals and flawed leadership. When it comes to an assessment of the manner of maleness required to be a Texas Ranger, the overwhelming thrust of the book, whether the subject matter is historical or contemporary, is positive.

Of particular interest, given the contemporaneous relevance of the matters involved, is Webb's perception of Texas Ranger Captain Frank Hamer's killing of the Texas outlaws Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker. Hamer features strongly in *The Texas Rangers*, and Webb saw in him an individual who had all of the strengths commensurate with his version of white Texas masculinity and, therefore, took up the gauntlet on his behalf. He wrote:

Captain Frank Hamer's natural gifts are such as would have made him distinguished as a Texas Ranger at any time during the history of the force, whether fighting Indians, Mexicans or bandits. Whatever his achievements -- and they are sufficient to extend his reputation over the nation -- they are small as compared to what might have been had greater opportunities offered themselves. In much of his work he has been handicapped by the political considerations of those in power; and he has seen much of his effort thwarted by the technicalities of the courts and the manipulations of the lawyers as shrewd and unscrupulous as they are able.¹¹²

Webb took the part of Hamer against what he saw as the corrosive intrigues of the bankers, the law and government. He adopted this strategy because he believed that it was important for the image of white Texas manhood, personified in Hamer, to be separated from the machinations of the state's power elite.

Webb also chose to ignore less-than-heroic facets of Hamer's career in the Rangers. In May 1930, Frank Hamer had been directly involved in the first instance in the history of the Rangers in which a prisoner entrusted to their care and protection had been killed by a mob. George Hughes, a Negro accused of assaulting a white woman, was burned to death in Sherman, Texas, while under the direct protection of Hamer. It is unlikely, given the contemporary notoriety of the case, that Webb could have been unaware of it. He chose, however, to omit it from his book and concentrated instead on issues that displayed Hamer's character in a better and more politically-relevant light.

Issues such as Hamer's struggle against the Texas Bankers' Association in the early 1930s demonstrate not only Webb's admiration for the persona of this particular Ranger but also his, and his hero Hamer's, antipathy toward sections of the Texas Establishment. In this case, Hamer suspected that 'simple-minded, half-drunken boys' were being set up to be shot by police officers who then collected the \$5,000 a head reward and divided the money between them. When an appeal to the bankers failed, Hamer turned to the press to help him in his fight against 'organised murder'.¹¹³ Webb presented the whole case as an example of the pervading corruption and indifference to natural justice that, he believed, was undermining the efforts of male heroes such as Hamer to cleanse Texas society.

If Hamer represented Webb's white Texas male ideal -- a figure of authority and

character whose commitment to the masculine standards of the state of Texas was unsurpassed -- then the outlaw Clyde Barrow was his antithesis. Hamer's role in the deaths of Barrow and Parker was later demonised in director Arthur Penn's 1967 movie, *Bonnie and Clyde*. Played in that film by Denver Pyle, the figure of Hamer, the Texas Ranger, was used to personify the tough, unyielding, ultra-violent, devious and conservative face of Texas society. The reasons for this negative characterisation will be discussed later and will focus on the changing face of white Texas maleness in American popular culture. Webb, however, writing thirty years prior to Penn's film, in a period in American history when the status of the Texas Ranger as an important and culturally-acceptable American icon was still firmly in place, embraced the persona of Hamer and eulogised his role in the killing of that other example of white Texas masculinity, Clyde Barrow. In reality, by the time that Hamer was involved in the killing of the real-life Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow in 1934, he was an ex-Ranger, having left the service just over a year previously in controversial, politically-instigated circumstances. Webb tells the story of Barrow's death in Hamer's words and, unlike writers Edward Anderson or Nelson Algren, expresses no sympathy for Barrow, whom he describes as 'the merciless killer'.¹¹⁴ Clearly, Barrow's anti-Establishment status and his subsequent reputation as a Texas 'Robin Hood' figure sparked no sense of empathy in Webb.

Webb tells us that, following the killing of Parker and Barrow, 'the public set in at once to lionize' Hamer. The good character of Hamer was demonstrated, according to Webb, in Hamer's refusal to commercialise his part in the killings. Webb makes it clear that what was most important to Hamer in the aftermath was protection of his image. When a showman toured Texas with Barrow's V8 Ford, Hamer confronted the man, struck him, and reportedly said, 'if you ever use my name again, even if you

are in South America, I will come to you if I have to crawl on my hands and knees.¹¹⁵

Webb follows this incident, which seeks to show the determination of Hamer to protect his status with customary resolve, integrity and the use of violence, with a damning indictment of the lesser men who were involved in running the state of Texas. Webb tells how Hamer was refused \$14 worth of expenses when he could not provide receipts for telephone calls made. Webb was determined to contrast the dedication and courage of Hamer with the small-minded frugality of these civil servants.¹¹⁶

Webb's discontent with aspects of how Texas was run did not, however, become synonymous with a total disaffection with the fundamentals of Texas society. His problem lay in his belief that men such as Hamer had become the political footballs of certain Texas governors whom both Webb and Hamer thought to be weak and corrupt. Webb quoted Hamer's reason for leaving the force in 1932:

I was not in the state service, having resigned from the Texas Rangers on November 1, 1932, because Miriam A. Ferguson and her husband were soon to take charge ... of the governor's office.¹¹⁷

Webb had written a series of articles in the *State Trooper* magazine throughout the 1920s, many of which railed against inept political interference. Most of these pieces were critical of the Fergusons but, with the election of Dan Moody to the governorship in 1926, Webb's faith in the system to provide the best of Texas manhood with the conditions they deserved was partly restored.¹¹⁸ Webb made it clear in his book that governors James E. Ferguson and Will Hobby were guilty of not giving, in the case of the Texas Ranger's involvement in the troubles along the

Mexican border, 'the superior leadership that the crisis demanded.'¹¹⁹

It was Webb's increasing awareness of the ordinariness of the state's political leadership that made his attacks on them so bitter. These men, he believed, were not of a calibre that compared with his historical heroes. Nor were they of a standard that was suitable to lead the Rangers in violent situations, every bit as dangerous as anything that had happened in the previous century. Despite this, as the most powerful male figures in Texas society, they were the obvious beneficiaries of the endeavour of the Rangers in previous times and, therefore, the inheritors of the mantle of the Texas hero. In the latter part of his book, Webb showed that the Rangers still had heroes who were not part of the Establishment machine. He did this by showing that men like Hamer would go to extraordinary lengths to distance themselves from the machinations of the ruling elite.

Race

Praise of the Texas Rangers in literature written by other white Texans is commonplace. As an example, Lewis Nordyke, the Texas-born journalist and author whose brother, Clarence, became a Texas Ranger, wrote in his book *The Truth About Texas* (1957): 'The real Mr Texas – booted, spurred, and ready to ride -- is the big-hatted, six-gunned Texas Ranger.' Nordyke's description of a real-life Ranger is reminiscent of the kind of characterisation found in dime novels. He wrote: 'Garrison is six feet two, with square jaws but with kindly brown eyes. There's some iron gray in his hair.' Of Garrison's role in society, Nordyke tells us: 'He has never shot a man. He's a churchman and an abstainer. He has served as president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.'¹²⁰

Other sections of Texas society, most notably those lacking the necessary racial or economic criteria to be considered part of the social elite, take a different view of the Texas Rangers. Those communities in Texas whose forebears suffered at the hands of the racist policies of the Texas Rangers argue that the brutal domination of white manhood over all other races in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a contributory factor in the continued ascendancy, both in state iconography and in social reality, of the state's elite white population. To look, for example, at the Mexican history of the border feuds is also to understand that there is a massive gulf in interpretation between the white and Mexican versions of history.

In his book *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (1981), Rodolfo Acuna not only questioned the role of the force, which he described at one point as 'Texas Ranger terrorism', but also accused Webb of being a staunch defender of the Rangers in the face of considerable contrary evidence. In a section entitled 'The Apologists and the Texas Rangers,' Acuna wrote that 'Webb was a scholarly man who did not have evil motives. His works were, however, racist.'¹²¹ Acuna's interest in Webb stemmed from his belief that 'Webb's writings have had considerable impact on the historiography of the West.' Acuna not only provides his own evidence for this claim but also cites the opinions of Texas novelist Larry McMurtry, folklorist and writer Americo Paredes, and historian Llerena B. Friend. Paredes's view of the Rangers emphasises their historical role in affirming and protecting the state's developing white-dominated social structure. Paredes believed that the Rangers were agents of the white ranching and merchant class who dominated and maintained socio-economic control in the Rio Grande Valley region. This was also the line taken by Acuna, who stated that 'Violence served the interests of Texas capitalists as a means to maintain a closed social structure that excluded Mexicans from all but the lowest

levels.’¹²² Acuna compared accounts of incidents involving the Rangers from Paredes and Webb and concluded that ‘Webb’s sources were compromised’. Larry McMurtry was also critical, accusing Webb of failing to maintain an intellectual independence in his work. McMurtry wrote: ‘The flaw in the book is a flaw of attitude. Webb admires the Rangers inordinately, and as a consequence the book mixes homage with history in a manner one can only think sloppy.’¹²³

W. Eugene Hollon, a close friend of Webb, writing in 1976, addressed the controversy surrounding *The Texas Rangers* by arguing that ‘Calling the author a racist, as some have done, is absurd and applies standards of the present to the past in a simplistic reinterpretation of history.’¹²⁴ But, if Acuna’s accusation is true, and there is much evidence to substantiate it, then Webb’s influential contribution to the broad perception of white Texas masculinity stems at its core from a supremacist viewpoint. If the Texas of the 1930s, when Webb’s work was published, had been free of racism and racial strife, then Hollon’s point would have a degree of validity. In that case, Webb’s opinions could be seen simply as just another interpretation of historical material with little obvious contemporary relevance. This was not, of course, the case, with the struggle to maintain the ascendancy of white Texas being fought as keenly as it had been a century before. This, therefore, gave Webb’s work particular significance by placing it in the hands of those who sought to maintain white supremacy in the state by applying the standards of the frontier past to the present.

In an assessment of Webb’s *The Great Plains* (1931), journalist Ronnie Dugger stated that ‘Webb’s approach to history sometimes seemed racial.’ Dugger then cited overt instances of racist comment in Webb’s work before concluding that ‘it would not be fair to hold these ways of thinking to the standards of current times.’¹²⁵

Dugger's excuse for Webb's racism is the standard one used by apologists for the historian's overt racial attitudes. Webb's biographer, Necah Stewart Furman, has also defended his racial position as being typical of his time and place. Furman maintains that:

In the 1900s this view was shared by many. Webb was not only reflecting his family heritage, which upheld traditions of the Old South, but also exhibited the general disenchantment and social temper of a nation recovering from the ravages of Reconstruction and adjusting to the influx of immigration and the rise of industrialism.¹²⁶

Furman was referring specifically to an essay written by Webb, while he was a student, for his Institutional History class in which he offered his views on the role of Blacks in society. After stating that the 'negro's' value as a citizen 'is a minus quality,' Webb continued:

As a political creature then the negro [sic] seems to be a failure ... He cannot hope to equal the white man, and should not strive for those fields of activity in which he suffers so serious a handicap, the negro must find his place and realise that he is a distinct, separate, and inferior caste, and that he will be dominated by the white until he is in turn able to dominate - which will never be.¹²⁷

Furman believed that Webb's racial views were 'not so derogatory as dismal' and that he was simply relating a societal truth as he saw it, that blacks had little or no

opportunity for progress at that time in Texas society.

With regard to Mexicans and Indians, Webb's views were, however, similarly negative. John Francis Bannon, a borderlands specialist, said, on the lack of acknowledgement of the contribution of Spanish culture in *The Great Plains*, 'Webb was a Texan, and they do have their anti-Mex feelings.'¹²⁸ As a young student, he had written an English composition centring on the life of a boy of Mexican/Indian ancestry. Entitled Cheeko, the story gives a valuable insight into the racial attitudes of Webb. A section of it reads:

With the blood of the Indian and of the Mexican in his veins, and the environment of the American Caucasian, he is a mongrel indeed. From one ancestor he inherits cunning, from the other treachery, and from his environment he will acquire knowledge, which will enable him to use both cunning and treachery in the most crafty and effective way.¹²⁹

It might be argued that Webb be forgiven at this early stage in his academic career for bringing to his work an inherent racial prejudice. Yet Webb the college student was a man well into his twenties, and not totally unworldly. The tone of his undergraduate work carried an assurance that suggested a firmly-held conviction that might, over time, become permanent. This is borne out by the fact that, more than twenty years later, Webb, in *The Texas Rangers*, wrote:

Without disparagement it may be said that there is a cruel streak in the Mexican nature, or so the history of Texas would lead one to believe. This cruelty may be a heritage from the Spanish of the Inquisition; it may, and doubtless should,

be attributed to the Indian blood.¹³⁰

In the intervening years, Webb had travelled and had been exposed to a myriad of ideas and opinions. During this period, America had witnessed the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in many states, including Texas.¹³¹ The racial tension around the border region of the Rio Grande Valley, especially in the years between 1911 and 1920, had been so intense and bitter that the effect on Mexican Americans had become ingrained in their folk culture. Even the conservative historian T. R. Fehrenbach acknowledged the impact of white culture, and its agents in the form of the Texas Rangers, on Mexican minds. He wrote:

Almost every lower class ethnic Mexican alive in those years carried a violent, superstitious fear of Rangers, and the folk hatred had permeated so deeply into all Mexicans that even third -- and fourth -- generation citizens, who had never actually seen a Ranger, reacted with an instinctive phobia toward the name.¹³²

Despite living close to this environment, nothing could shake the arrogant racial certainty of Webb's Southern upbringing from his writing.

Correspondents of Webb were often racists. He received the following letter in 1926 from 'Jack' complaining about a politician named 'Hartley'. A section of the letter read:

[Hartley] perpetrated some atrocities in the University of Washington that smell as strongly as a dead nigger after having lain in a cotton patch for three weeks under the Texas sun in August.¹³³

A 1936 letter from Mrs Gertrude Hills, who informed Webb of her disappointing experience at a Tim McCoy cowboy show, was in the same racially-controversial vein. It read:

I wanted to crawl under the seat, and would have but I happened to be seated next to a Jew who had discarded all peelings and skins and pop bottles, as well as cigarette stubs and ice cream boxes on the floor.¹³⁴

Webb, of course, cannot be held responsible for the tone of letters that friends, family or casual enquirers sent him. However, these letters were not discarded, but kept in Webb's personal files, and it could have been the white supremacist thrust of his work that encouraged such correspondence. The letters that he received from 'Jack' were extremely cordial and familiar over the course of most of the 1920s and 1930s and the tone of the above letter suggests a shared outlook on race. Webb received the letter while he was working at Nacogdoches alongside his friend and colleague E. E. Davis. Davis, onetime dean of the North Texas Agricultural College at Arlington, Texas, was driven by his interest in the eugenics movement and his 1940 publication *The White Scourge* represents a damning criticism of those in the Texas cotton industry who did not fit the white racial ideal. Webb was deeply immersed in this kind of racial thinking – the kind of thought process that directly influenced the creation of the type of white Texas masculinity found in *The Texas Rangers*. So, despite his reluctance to engage with what he felt were the more painful historical aspects of Southern history, Webb, nonetheless, displayed all of the racial elitism that has often been associated with a white Southern heritage.

Webb's overtly 'Southern' outlook and his resultant attitude toward race were in step with the mood of Texas in the 1930s. If the apologists for Webb's racist work are correct, and all he was reflecting was the state of racial thought among white Texans of the period, including the work and outlook of fellow academics such as Haley and Davis, then this is a measure of the extent to which racism permeated Texas society, as well as being an indicator of exactly where Webb stood in that society.

Neil Foley in his work, *The White Scourge*, points out that so ingrained were white supremacist views in Texas that even the Socialist Party of Texas, whose constitution preached racial harmony, was blighted by the spectre of race in the first quarter of the twentieth-century.¹³⁵ Webb's racist attitudes placed him in the mainstream of contemporary white Texas thinking on race. The deeper socio-political significance of this deep seam of racism, which books such as *The Texas Rangers* encouraged, was a factor in making racial thinking the norm and this in turn led to the popularity and electoral dominance of the more extreme racially-motivated and conservative political figures of the period.

Webb's *The Texas Rangers* was intensely insensitive to the plight of his state's minority ethnic populations, a fact that has not been lost on both contemporary and latter-day critics. A contemporaneous review by Webb's friend and fellow Texan, Stanley Walker, in the *New York Times* was typically mixed in its praise of Webb's endeavour and its unease with his chauvinistic political stance. 'A bit on the patriotic side perhaps,' Walker declared, 'but far and away the best work of its sort ever to come out of Texas.'¹³⁶ In 1936, shortly after the publication of *The Texas Rangers*, Webb received a letter from John Coffee Hays, the grandson of two Rangers. In the letter, Hays respectfully offered a criticism that was common at the time and has

become increasingly so as Webb's work is examined and questioned. Hays stated:

Should you care to have any criticism, I would like to say that it struck me that you did not give the Mexicans or Indians quite enough of a 'break' in that some of their good qualities were not brought more to the foreground. Both of my grandfathers and other old-timers whom I have known all had considerable regard for some of these people and I have heard of numerous instances where the Mexicans were exceedingly sportsmanlike.¹³⁷

We should take from this at least the possibility that Hays' second-hand experience of the Rangers represented a reality of racial commonality and mutual respect that Webb, at this point in his life, could not countenance.

The tone of his work, with regard to race and masculinity, closely resembles that of the short stories and western novels that were common in America from, at least, the 1860s onward. Zane Grey's short story, *The Ranger* (1929), offered a typical picture of what popular culture had deemed that Texas manhood should be:

He had the stature of the born Texan. And the lined weathered face, the resolute lips, grim except when he smiled, and the narrowed eyes of cool grey. . . . For a Texas ranger to fall in love with an ordinary Mexican girl was unthinkable.¹³⁸

Webb's own descriptions of the Texas Rangers articulated the same almost fawning respect and brought the extreme world of dime-novel characterisation to academia.

Webb's written work on the nature of the Texas Rangers was intensely serious. He

offered a total contrast to the more ironic view of the force to be found in O. Henry's *The Caballero's Way* (1904) which, ostensibly, exhibits the same disrespect for non-whites as Webb's later historical work:

The Cisco Kid had killed six men in more or less fair scrimmages, had murdered twice as many (mostly Mexicans), and had winged a larger number whom he modestly forbore to count. Therefore a woman loved him.

Henry's Ranger hero, Lieutenant Sandridge, is the personification of the Aryan superman: 'Six feet two, blond as a Viking, quiet as a deacon, dangerous as a machine gun.' The irony lies in the fact that Sandridge was bested in the story by the wiles of the Cisco Kid, who was described in physical terms as 'a stripling . . . with black, straight hair and a cold marble face that chilled the noonday.' The standard target for parody is one that is culturally well-established. This would suggest that, by the time O. Henry wrote this piece, in the early 1900s, the reputation and persona of the Texas Rangers had already achieved a status worthy of lampooning, at least by those writers who did not feel compelled to exaggerate the qualities of white Texas maleness.¹³⁹ ✓

There is little evidence of such irony in Webb's view of the Rangers. The vision of manhood he presented was pragmatic and steeped in the arrogant certainty of racial ascendancy. His account of the major incident at Brownsville in 1906 is a good example of his perception, not only of the Texas Rangers, but also of non-whites. The episode centred on a ten-minute explosion of violence by a group of coloured soldiers. The soldiers had been barracked in the town for some two weeks before the incident happened and tension had been growing steadily between the soldiers and the townsfolk. Webb never explains the reasons for this tension, although the billeting of

Negroes with guns in a Texas border town in the early years of the twentieth century seems, to the later observer, to be a recipe for trouble. Nonetheless, Webb explained that their mood was ugly before they even arrived in Brownsville. He wrote:

It seemed these troops were in a surly mood before they reached Texas because rumour had come to them that they were not wanted there. Their resentment grew when they came into the Jim Crow section and found themselves segregated in cars reserved for their race.¹⁴⁰

On the night in question, a barman and a horse were killed when the soldiers strode shooting out of their barracks, marched three blocks into town then retreated to their bunks. Webb described how Captain Bill McDonald of the Texas Rangers, against the advice of the town authorities, decided to confront the soldiers. Webb quoted, from the Captain's biography, his reasons for doing so:

'Them niggers have violated the laws of the state, and it's my duty to investigate the crime. I never yet had to have an order to go any place my duty called. I'm going into that fort, and the only pass I want I've got right here.'

The 'pass' was an automatic shotgun.¹⁴¹

Webb then went on to tell the tale of the Captain, face to face with the 'muzzles' of the coloured soldiers:

'You niggers hold up there! I'm Captain McDonald . . . and I'm down here to investigate a foul murder you scoundrels have committed. I'll show you

niggers something you've never been use' to.' And then, with an assurance that only a man of supreme courage can show, he barked: 'Put up them guns!' It was this act which led Major Penrose to say that Bill McDonald would charge hell with a bucket of water.¹⁴²

Webb went on to say that local judge Harbert Davenport had contradicted this account of the incident involving McDonald. According to Davenport, the involvement of the Rangers 'was wholly [invented] in the newspapers.' It had not actually happened.¹⁴³ This counter-evidence, from an eyewitness, was not enough for Webb to, at the very least, rein in the adulation he heaped on McDonald. Webb seemed determined, irrespective of contradictory historical data, to manufacture a masculinity that embodied the qualities he believed to be essential in his promotion of Texas manhood. This example from *The Texas Rangers* serves to illustrate how set Webb was in his admiration of those who had entered the mythological world of the Texas male hero. It also demonstrates, at the very least, an acceptance of the dismissive racial standards of such men as McDonald.

Webb's brush with active radicalism, which was at its height during the 1940s with his outspoken criticism of political interference in the running of the University of Texas, did not serve to eradicate his conservative attitudes toward race. He continued into the 1940s and 1950s with the hopeless task of trying to convince the rest of America of the merits of the South without dealing with the issue of racial segregation. He wrote in 1963, shortly before he died:

The Southerner is so concerned with the racial issue that he has no time for anything else. This is the issue that has plagued the South since 1820 ... The

racial issue is too heavy to move; it is too green to burn; the best we can do for the present is to plow around it and cultivate the rest of the field.¹⁴⁴

For Webb, the economic revitalisation of the South and Texas was more important than the issues of principle involved in race. This was, arguably, because, as a serious real-estate speculator and businessman, he was personally dependent on the former and was not seriously involved with the latter.¹⁴⁵ The pursuit of profit played a significant part in Webb's life. It impacted not only on his priorities with regard to the South, but also on how his image of white Texas masculinity was offered to the American public.

Image

In *The Great Plains*, Webb set out his view of how the West was perceived by the reading public and the difficulties for those who, like himself, sought to construct their own version of reality. He wrote that the, 'realities of the West, the far country, have created an illusion of unreality.'¹⁴⁶ Again, in 1957, he wrote:

Western history is bizarre because of the nature of what it has got. The historians and other writers do what men have always done in the desert. They make the best of what little they do have. Westerners have developed a talent for taking something small and blowing it up to giant size ... They write of cowboys as if they were noble knights, and the cowmen kings.¹⁴⁷

Much of that unreality he wrote of in 1931 manifested itself, he believed, in other

writing that cheapened through hyperbole the Texas historical experience. The work of Andy Adams was greatly admired by Webb and represented his view of what best embodied, in novel form, an authentic view of Texas manhood in the nineteenth century. Adams' most notable work was *The Log of a Cowboy* (1903), which, compared to the kind of writing that was being published around this time, was a low-key, matter-of-fact account of life on a trail drive. Narrated by a character named Tom Quirk, the series of stories, told around the campfire, accorded the cowboy an understated masculine dignity that fitted perfectly with Webb's idea of what a man should be in this seminal period of Texas history.

Webb was also impressed with Emerson Hough's book *North of '36* (1923), and his involvement in the controversy surrounding the novel is yet another indicator of how, even this early in his career, his concern for the image of Texas and its men manifested itself. Webb's reservations about Hough's book were founded on the author's moulding of the story so that it could be offered for cinema adaptation. Webb wrote: 'Hough bowed his head to the demands of fiction and to the possibilities of the moving pictures, and thereby marred what might have been a great work.'¹⁴⁸ Aside from this artistic fault, which saw Hough compromise a degree of authenticity in terms of characterisation and tone in order to reach a wider audience, Webb saw the book as an example of the kind of fiction that would underpin the resurgence of Texas maleness.¹⁴⁹

Hough, a non-Texan, was another writer whose political opinions were based on his perception of race. He also had definite views on the image of the Texas hero. On Sam Houston he wrote:

Not elegant nor finished; bold, strong, rude perhaps; over the six-foot mark,

large, powerful, florid; a man of bone and brawn – what wonder that such vital energy should accord to itself the lofty and overlooking eye, that it should unconsciously arrogate to itself a place of leadership.¹⁵⁰

He was strongly of the belief that America should close its borders in order to protect the integrity and purity of its people. He wrote:

It is a grandiose gesture to call America the land of the free; to invite to our shores every item of dead broke and wholly inefficient humanity which could not make a living even in commercialised vice, at theft or highway robbery in any other country in the world.¹⁵¹

Given the vehemence of this opinion it is not surprising that Hough carried it into the male characterisation in his novels.

North of '36 was critically reviewed in *The Literary Digest International Book Review* of November 1923. The reviewer, Stuart Henry, suggested that Hough's book did not come close to representing any kind of historical reality. Henry wrote:

As a romance for the unsophisticated, 'North of '36' is of the best prevailing order. As anything like true history, however, one may regretfully confess that it is – to employ the term used by one of our popular Presidential aspirants – 'bunk'.¹⁵²

Webb organised an attack on Henry that sought to question his right to produce such a criticism. He described Henry's article as an 'unwarranted attack on Western people

by an Eastern writer in an Eastern literary magazine.’¹⁵³ Webb engaged the assistance of authors Andy Adams and Eugene Manlove Rhodes and sought the support of, among others, George W. Saunders of the Old Trail Drivers Association, based in San Antonio. What is important to understand about this episode of Webb’s life is exactly what motivated him to embark on what was, essentially, a futile attack on one man’s critical opinion. Despite the efforts of Webb and his team of self-appointed experts to prove that Henry was an outsider and, therefore, in no position to judge the authenticity of Hough’s work, it transpired that Henry had spent a part of his early life in the key cattle town of Abilene, Texas, and was, in fact, more qualified than Webb himself to judge the mood of the time.

It is easier to understand Webb’s reaction to Henry’s criticism if his motivation for launching his own attack on Henry is appreciated. Webb’s biographer, Necah Stewart Furman, wrote that the core of Webb’s anger stemmed from his frustration at his inability adequately to articulate his feelings for Texas and its history. Webb, according to Furman, became bitter in his efforts to defend his ‘people, regional traditions, and the place of western literature in the national spectrum.’¹⁵⁴ The ‘national spectrum’ at that time (the early 1920s) was seemingly dominated by such celebrated iconoclasts as H. L. Mencken, whom Webb accused of making ‘suckers out of the American people and then laughed at them for their foolishness.’¹⁵⁵ Webb, like many others in the South, was seeking a suitable platform on which to display what he saw as the best of the region. Whatever that platform would be, it would not involve the kind of literary ideas that necessitated an acceptance of what Eugene Manlove Rhodes described as an attempt, ‘to Balkanise the American spirit, to Russianise our politics, to Levantise our business methods, to Europeanise our letters.’¹⁵⁶

A literary renaissance in Southern thinking, promoted by men such as William Faulkner, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren, made it easier for intellectual Southerners in the 1920s and 1930s to assert personal views of the South and its past with a little less guilt than had been exhibited in the half-century following the Civil War. This intellectually-driven avenue to regional awareness was never utilised in Texas. On the contrary, those writers closely associated with intellectual life through their association with the state's universities, instead of purging themselves of their Southern past through literature, created a new identity that not only reflected the bitterness of the past, but also the narrow intellectual world of contemporary Texas. Texas literature of this period does not belong among the highest levels of American literary achievement. Whatever subject matter Texas writers turned their minds to was better articulated in style and content elsewhere. What had to be said on behalf of the South concerning the past or the condition of the present was better articulated, with the possible exception of Katherine Anne Porter, by non-Texas writers. In Georgia, Erskine Caldwell wrote the sordid detail of the life of the Lester family in *Tobacco Road* (1932). In Mississippi, Faulkner charted the decline of the Sartoris and Compson families and the rise of the corrupt Snopes clan in novels such as *Sartoris* (1929) and *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). What this writing had in common was its trend toward self-examination through a scrutiny of decadent Southern vulnerability. Meanwhile in Texas, Webb and his colleagues, instead of seeking to understand the condition of their home state by examining their weaknesses, were looking to promote and produce a reassertion of Texas via a celebration of the state's most powerful asset, white Texas manhood.

Having created his homage to the stature of white Texas masculinity in *The Texas Rangers*, Webb's commitment to the stereotypical image of his home state slowly

waned. As with his friend and colleague Dobie, with maturity and experience Webb came to see Texas, and the paraphernalia that surrounded the state's image, in a less dogmatic light. The historic individualism that he was proud to chronicle in *The Texas Rangers* or *The Great Plains* was now the preserve of those in society, most obviously on the conservative political scene or in the business community, who used that individualism as a rationale for self-advancement. This, among other factors, contributed to Webb's critical analysis and casual treatment of the image of his home state.

Webb, like Dobie, was seduced by the stature of English society when he visited that country in the early years of World War Two. The depth of England's cultural and historical experience, which did not require the constant accompaniment of strident boasting, both impressed and embarrassed Webb. In a letter to his friend Roy Bedichek, he explained:

I am beginning to feel twinges of shame over being a Texan – not because of Texas, which I suppose I am very fond of, but because of the blatant yapping about it that goes on in all quarters. There is a vulgarity about this so-called Texas spirit that reminds me of the flashy tie, the 'Hot Springs diamonds,' and the 'refined' manner of a spieler in front of a sideshow exhibiting the headless or tail-less woman.¹⁵⁷

These comments serve as further confirmation that Webb, in later life, was at odds with the popular image of his home state. In comparison with the sophistication and depth of older, more established cultures, he watched with foreboding the development of a Texas ethos which was based on superficial opportunism.

Webb believed that the end of frontier had changed the conditions suitable for the creation of men of real character in Texas. In a speech at Austin in June 1939, he declared that America was in trouble because of a lack of a frontier environment that made some men leaders and sifted the best of masculinity from the dregs. He was reported as saying: 'When the frontier closed democracy had no West to drain off the unemployed, the lawless and the malcontents.'¹⁵⁸ The social conditions in Texas in the mid-twentieth century were, therefore, not conducive to the development of men of real stature. Previously, good men were required, through the necessity of creating a society in which to live, to deal, in any way necessary, with lesser men who, through their actions, were deemed to be anti-social. Men of character would rise naturally in such an environment. No such conditions now existed in Texas and therefore, with the exception of a few notable individuals such as Frank Hamer, the quality of modern-day maleness was, according to Webb, questionable and unworthy of tribute.

Webb also felt increasingly uncomfortable with the machinations and political direction of the Texas ruling elite. A political pragmatist, he was involved in some of the controversies that flared up around the University of Texas, but not deeply enough to get his fingers burned. Furman explained: 'Webb, although regarded as a liberal, did not have the radical connotations that some Texans had. He was one of the few professors who managed to get along with both business and academic circles.'¹⁵⁹ That said, Webb often expressed contempt for the captains of Texas industry. In 1956, when the shadow of George Stevens film *Giant* was ubiquitous in Texas and Texans in their tens of thousands flocked to see how Hollywood saw the excesses of the class of oil millionaire, Webb wrote: 'God knows our oil kings are obnoxious, but they are not numerous.'¹⁶⁰

Webb's efforts to promote the image of white Texas men were occasionally

marked by attempts to market the icon that some would find tawdry. He attempted, for example, to promote the concept of the Texas Rangers for financial gain in a variety of ways. It seemingly mattered little to Webb that, somewhere in this process, the dignified glow that he thought to have surrounded the men of the Rangers might have become somewhat tarnished. In 1936, Paramount agreed to use Webb's *The Texas Rangers* as the basis of the state's centenary celebration movie. Webb sold the rights to the company for over \$11,000 and in the process contracted away all control over the finished product.¹⁶¹ King Vidor directed the film and Louis Stevens wrote the screenplay, from a story created by Vidor and his wife, Elizabeth Hill Vidor. As this multi-collusion would suggest, the finished film bore little resemblance to Webb's work. When he asked the producer why the company had employed little else but the title, the reply he received was: 'Protection.'¹⁶² When the film was premièred in San Antonio, Webb did not receive an invitation. Instead the occasion was taken over, much to Webb's annoyance, by the state's political elite.

The storyline of Vidor's film centres on the adventures of Jim Hawkins (Fred McMurray) and his two friends, 'Polkadot Sam' McGee (Lloyd Nolan) and Wahoo Jones (Jack Oakie). The group are initially stagecoach robbers until Hawkins and Jones turn straight and join the Rangers. McGee continues in his life of crime and is eventually shot down by Hawkins. The film contains a strong thread of knockabout humour, a classic Western plot and some action scenes.

The key point of interest lies in the further confirmation of the white male as the saviour of Texas society through the fight for law and order. The film is credited with playing a role in bringing the Western back to the A-movie fold, following the slump in interest in the early 1930s. Paramount had distributed the Hopalong Cassidy series and were encouraged enough by its popularity to invest once again in big Westerns.

The Texas Rangers was the first of these. The film also seems to have been a watershed in relation to the popularity of the Texas Rangers on film. In the ten years prior to its release, twenty-eight movies were made with a Ranger theme. In the ten years following the production of Vidor's film, that figure topped seventy-five. Again, these films focused exclusively on the exploits of white Texas manhood. By this time, of course, the Texas Rangers' profile had increased due to the radio series, *The Lone Ranger*, and Webb's own volume, which had been adapted for schools.¹⁶³

The Texas press, disappointed with previous attempts to capture the aura of the Texas Rangers in any medium, welcomed the film as they had the book. The reviewer for the *Dallas Morning News*, when reviewing Webb's book, looked back to the 1929 film *Rio Rita* as an example of a missed opportunity. He wrote:

Texas John Boles could not make the border law rider real in 'Rio Rita'.

Scores of swashbuckling tales fall short of realism. But in 'Texas Rangers' the men in tall white hats have at last found their historian.¹⁶⁴

The journalist, perhaps because of the connection of Vidor's film with the centennial celebrations and the tendency of the conservative Texas press at this time to talk up the event, and certainly because of Webb's connection with it, looked forward to it. He also related the opinion of a 'Hearst executive' who felt that the Texas Rangers 'lacked an apostle, that no one had seized on the picturesque figure of border life to present his appeal in play or fiction.'¹⁶⁵ Vidor's biographers assert that Vidor claimed Webb as a source but go on to say of the film that there is 'too little to connect with the reality of Texas itself. "Texas" inspires only the limp framing narration, and a few jokes about size.'¹⁶⁶ However, by this stage Webb was not interested or

concerned that Paramount would go to the trouble and expense of taking the title, without utilising any of the adventures contained within the book. As already stated, what Webb offered was a form of official sanction and academic status. This, given that the film was made as part of an official celebration, may have been all that Paramount required from him. For his part Webb was only too happy to pocket the money, consider the benefits of buying land during an economic downturn, and move on.

Paramount Pictures, who produced the film, wrote to Webb to ask him specifically about the Texas reaction to the portrayal of a state icon. Ralph Jester, on behalf of the company operations in Hollywood, asked Webb:

After seeing *The Texas Rangers* I should be very curious to know your reaction to the film. My personal surmise is that you and many of the good people of Texas might well have been disturbed by the casting of actors whose accents hardly rang with the proper drawl – a rather minor matter, very important to audiences of the locale.¹⁶⁷

Unfazed by the array of accents or the portrayal of white Texas maleness found in Vidor's film, Webb offered the studio the rights to *The Great Plains*, only to be refused and told by Paramount in New York that films such as James Cruze's *The Covered Wagon* (1923) and John Ford's *The Iron Horse* (1924) had already touched upon those aspects of the Western experience found in Webb's book.

The studio was also at a loss to see 'how in any of our necessarily fictionalised films we could cover a subject of such scope and magnitude.'¹⁶⁸ For a year or so, Ralph Jester in the Hollywood office of Paramount continued to correspond with

Webb on the faint possibility of Webb and he colluding on a movie version of *The Great Plains*, which had a working title of *The Valor of the Plains*. In none of this correspondence did Webb express concern over the filmic image of white Texas masculinity. It was proposed by Jester that there be two versions of this film, one for ‘educational’ purposes and the other for ‘commercial’. Jester also sought Webb’s advice on other work, the tenor of which gives an insight into the kind of western movie venture he was involved with. The following script extract is from a proposed short feature entitled *The Spirit of the Plainsman* and a portion of the film’s narrative reads as follows:

The cowboy at the close of the day ... singing of his life on the range – a plaintive song, born of long, hard-riding days and lonely nights. To millions of people he typifies the wild and woolly West. And he was well fitted for the mantle of his fame, for he was born and bred of sturdy pioneers who made the western wilderness a mighty empire – pioneers who were led into the new land by the most adventurous soul of them all – The Plainsman.¹⁶⁹

Although this was standard, stereotyped western-movie fare, Webb engaged with the script and suggested a selection of minor changes that he believed would give the film a degree of authenticity.¹⁷⁰ At no time in Webb’s correspondence with Jester did the historian object to the ordinariness of the material or the fact that the characterisation of cowboys or plainsmen allowed no deeper examination of the historical realities of early Texas.

Houghton Mifflin of Boston, Webb’s publishers, expressed concern and disappointment that the movie version of Webb’s book had departed so greatly from

the original. However, LeBaron R. Barker, Jr., on behalf of the company, wrote to Webb and offered some solace:

I was naturally rather surprised to find that they had developed a Western of the Zane Grey type around your title ... As you know yourself, selling a book to the movie is usually helpful to the author's bank account rather than to his peace of mind as a creative artist. I know you will come around to the point of view that since they forked over ten or eleven thousand, they are quite welcome to write their own story.¹⁷¹

The publisher's primary concern was to protect book sales and to that end they were worried that the distance between the book and film 'knocks in the head all the book store tie ups I had planned for the movie.'¹⁷²

While the publishers were expressing their concern that Webb's work had been 'cheapened and popularized,' they were themselves actively engaged in transforming Webb's ideas on the Texas Rangers into a board game.¹⁷³ Webb's idea was to convert the story into a game similar to the 'G-men' game, which Parker Brothers, who made a selection of board games, including the popular 'Monopoly' and 'Pollyanna', had launched in 1936. Houghton Mifflin met with Parker Brothers and the following ideas were discussed:

The red rectangles should be Indians with Indians drawn on either side ... The green rectangles should be considered as Mexican ambushes. A player landing on the green should wait one turn for reinforcements ... then chase the Mexicans back to their own country ... the blue stars should ... show the place

where a bad man had been killed, and named for such bad men as Sam Bass, Clyde Benton [sic], John Wesley Hardin, Seaborn Barnes, Bonnie Parker etc. – whom the Rangers have killed.¹⁷⁴

This letter continues for three pages outlining detail that Webb and Houghton Mifflin had already discussed, as well as new ideas from the publisher or the manufacturer. The letter suggests that the driving force behind the game was Webb.

The money he received from Paramount soothed any chagrin Webb felt at losing control of the film. He was later to say that the payment 'made the Depression more tolerable.'¹⁷⁵ His regular correspondent, 'Jack', wrote to Webb after seeing the film. He told Webb:

Yesterday I saw the Texas Rangers on the screen. I noted that the credit line said that it was based on data from your book – and concluded after seeing it that it was very well put because the similarity just about ended at the title. I hoped that you charged them plenty for it.¹⁷⁶

Webb had a reputation for the careful nurturing of his financial matters. In a letter to his future wife, written in 1916 when he was a poorly-paid teacher, he declared, 'I want money, money, money, and I am going to have it.'¹⁷⁷ J. Frank Dobie wrote of his friend Webb:

As prosperity made him aware of the independence that it gives to an individual, he became, it seems to me, more actively considerate of that basis of freedom for other individuals and for Texas and the South.¹⁷⁸

It is no surprise therefore, that Webb sought to exploit his success with *The Texas Rangers* for every dollar he could squeeze out of it irrespective of the impact his ventures had on the iconographic status of Texas maleness. The dismissal of principle at the alter of self-interest had always been Webb's personal creed.

In his first book, *The Great Plains* (1931), he had written of the motivation of the Texas agrarian radicals of the 1870s and 1880s and explained: 'Why should they not turn to radicalism? When men suffer, they become politically radical; when they cease to suffer, they favor the existing order.'¹⁷⁹ Webb could, of course, have concluded that at least some of those who organised so widely in Texas in this period believed passionately in the fundamentals of their cause, irrespective of their own socio-economic circumstances. However, in *The Texas Rangers*, Webb promoted a Texas maleness that was oblivious to personal gain and was motivated solely by principle. That he attributed this kind of standard to those who upheld the political and socio-economic status quo and not to those who challenged it, says much about Webb's view of what best constituted the manhood of the state.

Haley

J. Evetts Haley was a key figure in the construction of Texas historical discourse between the 1920s and the 1960s. His achievements include his early research work at the University of Texas where he headed the Texas Historical Records Survey. He was also employed as field secretary and subsequently president of the Panhandle-Plains Historical Society, and as the first director of Americanism at Texas Technological College. Haley was also directly responsible for the Nita Stewart

Haley Memorial Library at Midland, Texas. This, plus his interpretative written work on the men and institutions that, in Haley's estimation, created the basis of West Texas ranching economy and society, sets Haley at the forefront of twentieth-century Texas historical endeavour and achievement as well as being a major player in determining just what kind of history and masculine image of the state was offered to the Texas public.

His profile as a historian, however, has usually been eclipsed by his profile as a political activist. Haley was a fierce opponent of Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930s, an equally fervent advocate of segregation and anti-communism in the 1940s and 1950s and a fanatical adversary of Lyndon B. Johnson and his 'Great Society' programmes in the 1960s. His public profile was dominated by this adherence to right-wing politics. Nonetheless, Haley's work as a collector and interpreter of Texas history remains unsurpassed. His achievements as a historian and his presence as a political activist ensured that, together with Dobie and Webb, his power to sway the ways in which Texans viewed themselves and their state was unequalled. Considered together with his two fellow Texans, Haley also represented a unique consistency of perspective in his opinions and work from the 1920s through to his death in 1995.

Historian Walter L. Buenger's accurate assertion that 'much of the writing on Texas has been a flight from modernity; an attempt to recapture, defend, and celebrate a more romantic, primitive and pristine past' is nowhere more relevant than in the work of Haley.¹⁸⁰ The modern world, in Haley's estimation, could not be trusted to stay true to the unspoilt integrity of his vision of Texas masculinity. Ordinary men inhabited the world and Haley had no faith in them to stay close to the image of maleness that he created. Every action that Haley engaged in was designed to prevent, change or at least to minimise the consequences of an inevitable

transformation in Texas society. Haley not only promoted a politically-charged view of Texas men, he actively sought to censor the work of writers, academics and artists whose view of the world differed from his own. His conceited perspective stemmed, like Dobie and Webb, from his belief in the values of, and his inordinate admiration for, the men of the previous generation. In 1959 he wrote:

Fortunately and fascinatingly, for my generation, the wind-worn men who originally claimed that land for their own were still sitting straight in their saddles, bossing our roundups, owning the herds . . . From my first recollections I had lived among such men as these, my first feelings of awe superseded only by my lavish admiration.¹⁸¹

M. E. Bradford compared Haley's work on historical Texas maleness to the writing of the Greek chronicler of male heroism, Plutarch. Bradford wrote of Haley's work:

These works are, on the one hand, thorough and straightforward biographies of members of 'the old breed.' They are also something else again – generically the only formal equivalent of the epic now possible in our largely sceptical and deracinated world.¹⁸²

J. Evetts Haley came from background similar to that of Webb. He was born at Belton, Texas, in 1901. He claimed that his heritage was solidly Southern, citing two Confederate veterans as grandfathers – a Mississippi planter on the paternal side, a Texas trail-driver on the maternal side. His father owned a hardware business and then a hotel before venturing into ranching. It was the ranching aspect of his

upbringing that was to dominate Haley's persona. Here, among the old-timers and their tales of the past, Haley was to find the raw material for his idealised model of Texas maleness. Upon graduating from college in 1925, Haley worked as a field secretary for the Panhandle Plains Historical Society. He entered graduate school at the University of Texas at Austin in the same year and studied under Eugene C. Barker, a man who was to have a profound influence on the course and conduct of Haley's life. In a 1982 radio interview, Haley recalled the academic Barker in much the same ultra-masculine manner that he would use to describe trail drivers or cowboys. He said of his mentor:

he was very rugged, open-faced and very keen blue eyes, rugged type man, rugged hands, the hands of a man who worked. Before he came to the university . . . he had whipped one of his roommates in a fistfight. But . . . he was the most modest man that I've ever known. He was sensitive, but . . . the average person never realised it because he was so rugged in his views.¹⁸³

It is not usual to hear of a lifelong academic being measured by standards that emphasised the physicality of his maleness. However, as a measure of respect this was Haley's highest accolade, and it serves to inform us of his attitude toward his preferred manner of masculinity.

Haley completed his master's degree in 1926 with a thesis on the history of the Texas cattle trails and returned to the Panhandle to continue with his work of collecting artefacts and interviewing those who had been active in early Texas ranch life. He was commissioned in 1927 by officials of the former Capitol Freehold Land and Investment Company to write a history of the vast XIT Ranch. It was this work

that made Haley's name as a historian. It was the first corroboration between him and financial interests in the creation of a historical work and was not to be the last. The book also set the tone for the kind of controversy that he was to court for the rest of his life. Haley's unmovable and limited perspective on what he believed constituted the best of Texas maleness led to him accusing a Texas family, the Spikes, of being outlaws with a sense of honour and morality beneath that expected of the historical Texas male. Haley was sued for libel by the remnants of the family and agreed to withdraw the book and to pay the sum of \$17,500 to settle all pending claims.¹⁸⁴

Haley was appointed Collector of Research in the Social Sciences at the University of Texas at Austin in 1929. Don E. Carlton, current director of the Center for American History at Austin, outlined the importance of Haley's contribution to the historical research facilities in Austin, as well as the politically charged and controversial circumstances surrounding the end of his time there, in his 1984 work, *Who Shot The Bear?*¹⁸⁵ Haley charged that the university dismissed him as a direct result of his active and vocal opposition to Roosevelt's New Deal.¹⁸⁶ By 1936, following his departure from Austin, the overwhelming passion in Haley's life was politics.¹⁸⁷ He became chairman of the anti-Roosevelt, Jeffersonian Democrats of Texas, in order to fight what he saw as the intrusion of government into the lives of the individual.

This was a time when the nationally-controlled 'liberal' Democratic Party did not reflect in any shape or form the views of conservatives in the Texas Democratic Party. Historical attachment to the Democrats meant that these Texas anti-New Dealers could not abandon their party and join the Republicans. Instead, they organised themselves in a variety of right-wing groupings in order to undermine the national Democratic administration. George Norris Green describes these rebels as 'bolters'

and identifies the figure of Haley as the first and most conspicuous ‘bolter’ of the 1930s.¹⁸⁸

For the next thirty years Haley was involved in a range of controversial struggles, all of which he conducted in an overtly aggressive manner that reflected his own definition of how a Texas male should proceed. Some of these controversies attracted attention on a national scale, the most obvious being the furore surrounding Haley’s publication in 1964 of his book, *A Texan Looks at Lyndon*. Most were concerned with education: with the fundamental values of how and what the school-children and college students of Texas were taught.¹⁸⁹

Haley’s perspective was solidly Southern and his vision of the past was determined by the freedom accorded to Southern manhood on the plains of the West in the years following the Civil War. His theory was that, in this setting, the strongest of those displaced from the Old South could re-engage, without fear of interference, with their chosen destiny. The essence of Texas history, according to Haley, centred on the character of white Texas masculinity. He wrote:

The history of Texas that we like to recall is primarily the story of vigorous men impelled by strong wills and sustained by brave hearts to carry their aspirations, ideals, and convictions to positive ends.¹⁹⁰

Most of these men were white Southerners who, in Haley’s estimation, were fired by a potent mix of Southern righteousness, indignation and the opportunity for freedom and enterprise offered by the availability of land in Texas.

In his first public address, on the evening of 7 March 1925 at the West Texas State Teachers College, Haley chose to speak on the topic of ‘Fighting Sprit.’ The speech

focused exclusively on the title topic with regard to maleness. In the first few lines he quoted from the work of Robert Browning and alluded to such notable historical male figures as Chancellor Bismarck, Napoleon and Alexander the Great. He also spoke of the admiration of Thomas Carlyle for 'heroes and hero worship.'¹⁹¹ This concentration on the positive side of a masculinity that embodied epic status was to continue in Haley's work until he died more than sixty years later.

Haley was always willing to attach himself and his politics to the central pillars of Texas history. When he ran for Governor of Texas in 1956 his campaign literature emphasised his personal claim to the history of Texas, describing himself as, 'great-grandson of James Evetts, veteran of the Battle of San Jacinto.' Haley understood the emotional attachment that many Texans had to the repetitious diet of white historical supremacy. In the teaching of Texas history, the white Texas male had always been portrayed as being at the apex of Texas society. It is the perception of the past that gives strength and relevance to how white Texas society traditionally deals with the present and plans for the future. David Montejano, telling of the struggle of the Mexican people in Texas to find a place in society, wrote of the negative impact that the dominant white-based history had on the minority population of the state:

'Regardless of which aspect of the Mexican problem was mentioned, Texans frequently injected a historical element in outlining their position.'¹⁹² It was not surprising, therefore, that a historian/politician such as Haley would attach himself to the basic and biased outlines of Texas history. Haley's emphasis on the endeavour of the white Texas male had a serious social import in that it served to underline the societal impotence of the maleness of other races.

His view of the world was unapologetically Confederate. Haley saw the South as the last hope for his brand of Americanism. A platform based on his interpretation of

Southern values was always a key part of Haley's agenda and his pamphlet *The New Deal and the Negro Vote*, issued by the Jeffersonian Democrats of Texas in 1936 and written by Haley in his capacity as Chairman, represented an unrefined statement full of Southern anger and bitterness. He wrote:

The South stands at the crossroads of its destiny. Is it to continue to be a 'white man's country,' or is it to be sunk to the cultural level of the negro [sic], and have the purity of its blood corrupted with mulatto strains? Is it to deny the traditions of its sturdy warriors who died upon a thousand Southern battlefields, and wrote its character and honor among the flaming pages of history for the cause of State's Rights and freedom?¹⁹³

Haley's pamphlet ripped through the Roosevelt administration. His general thrust was to accuse the Democrats of courting the Negro vote or, as Haley described them, 'the hordes of Harlem', so that they could abandon their historic commitment to, and dependence on, the South. This would result, according to Haley, in 'the final threat of putting the blacks beside the whites, from the school room to the beauty parlours.' In Haley's estimation, the creeping presence of integration was intrinsically linked with 'communistic ideals' and he concluded by asking his fellow Texans if they would march 'with the spirit and courage of those who went to willing death beneath the standards of Jackson and Lee.'¹⁹⁴

His commitment to the South of history was total. The Civil War, he believed, did not represent any basis for significant change in Southern attitudes. In 1956, during his campaign for Governor, he spoke to a rally, described by the *Dallas Morning News* as a 'rebel yelling, Dixie singing audience,' and said, 'Nothing was settled by

the Civil War except a test of force. It didn't solve any moral problems.'¹⁹⁵ His faith in Southern values as bulwark against communism and racial integration was again expressed during the same round of campaign rallies. At the Alfalfa Festival at Hearne, Texas he said:

The Communist conspiracy is determined to desegregate the South. What [sic] are they out to do this? The fighting power of this country, the chief refuge of freedom on the face of the earth, is in the South. There primarily do people have the character and courage to stand up and fight. Therefore the Communist international cannot conquer this country until they destroy the pride, the fighting pride, and the racial pride of the South.¹⁹⁶

Haley's racism was not confined to the traditional prejudice of his Mississippi heritage. The Tejano and Mexican population of Texas, in terms of their presence and their claim on Texas history, was also a target. In 1941, he proposed that the University of Texas Spanish library collections be returned as a gift to Mexico and other Latin-American countries. Haley's motive for this controversial course of action was not philanthropic. He believed, instead, that the loss of these important historical collections would generate both space and money for work that centred on white Texas history. He was quoted in the newspaper of the students of the University of Texas as saying:

If we were to donate those collections to our fine friends to the south, there would be room left in the Texas institution, as well as funds, for building up our sadly-neglected state records and literary memorabilia, which are of vastly

more importance to more people that [sic] those documents in Spanish which a majority of our citizens cannot even read.¹⁹⁷

The tone of this extract is both dismissive of Latin-American culture and exclusively centred on the historical preferences of those, like Haley, who sought to represent the cultural and racially-exclusive needs of the majority Texas white populace. Haley was motivated solely by a need to rid his home state of history that deflected from the dominant role of white Texans.

Unlike Webb and Dobie, whose views on race mellowed with the years, Haley remained dismissive of non-white contributions to Texas history all his life. His ingrained racism refused to allow the stereotypical white-based image to become eroded by the claims of a significant non-white contribution to areas of the Texas historical experience that Haley considered sacrosanct. One such area was the idea that Texas cowboys were overwhelmingly white. In 1982, one of his biographers, Chandler A. Robinson, sent him an article from *Parade* magazine, which stated:

The media image of the cowboy as a white native-born hero is not accurate. In the heyday of the cowboys, one in seven was black and one in seven was Mexican. Some were Indian . . .

Haley's reply included the following:

As to the little article on nigger cowboys . . . I can hardly imagine a greater distortion of the truth . . . When I was running the West outfits forty years ago, we had two or three nigger hands on the Clear Lake Ranch who sometimes

served as cowboys, but usually in simply a helpful capacity . . . over a period of seventy years I recall seeing but one working with us on the range, and I think he was probably a good cowboy though I was not around him enough to find out . . . This story by these damned racists with its false figures and conclusions is another example of the agitation in reverse by a bunch of lying nitwits that is making me weary.¹⁹⁸

Haley may well have been correct in his questioning of the size of the black contribution to the history of the Texas cowboy. However, the tone of this letter and the opinions expressed within it confirm the fact that Haley, even at the age of eighty, was concerned that the popular iconographic image of Texas remain safely within the cultural domain of the state's white population.

Haley was intolerant of the needs of the Mexican and Black populations of Texas and celebrated this fact. As an unreconstructed Confederate, he was also angrily opposed to and prejudiced against the power of the Federal government, which he saw behind most of the wrongs in Texas society and, of course, as the chief promoter of multi-culturalism. It was the all-embracing impact of Roosevelt's New Deal that sparked Haley into action as a political activist. His 1934 article in the *Saturday Evening Post*, entitled 'Cow Business and Monkey Business,' best illustrates the fundamental problems that he had with big government.¹⁹⁹ However, long after the Roosevelt administration had gone, Haley continued with his commitment to his concept of individualism and Southern integrity, free of the hand of stifling federalism. In an article entitled, 'Now is the Time for Righteous Intolerance,' published in the news-sheet of Texans for America, Haley wrote:

We need intolerance of the dissolute oligarchy called the Supreme Court, which repeatedly favors the communists instead of Americans in its decisions; which is ruthlessly determined to wipe out the white civilization of the South.²⁰⁰

His candidacy for Governor of Texas in 1956 was primarily designed to give him a platform from where he could attack yet another branch of government, the Supreme Court, and specifically their 1954 decision to outlaw segregation in public schools.

It was the issue of segregation that led to the sacking of two professors at Texas Technical College in 1957 when Haley (an appointee of right-wing Governor Alan Shivers) was active on the school's board of directors. His action on this occasion, and the belligerent and threatening language that accompanied it, led to a reaction by Ernest Joiner, editor of the *Ralls Banner*. Joiner took the fight to Haley by mirroring his macho language and aggressive stance. In a scathing article attacking the dismissal of the two professors, headed by a bastardised quote from the popular song, 'That's What I Like About the South,' which Joiner changed to, 'pickin' cotton and whuppin' niggers, that's what I like about the South,' the journalist accused Haley of being an out and out political bully and a coward. He wrote:

Dr Abernethy has been active in the 'liberal' wing of the Democratic Party in Texas, and Dr Greenberg has expressed his views on integration. And cowboy Haley needed another reason maybe for firing the two professors?

Joiner understood perfectly the image that Haley had adopted and proceeded to insult Haley's political spinelessness, referring to him as part of a group of 'hybrid political crumbs who haven't got the guts to call themselves Republicans.' He also

sarcastically alluded to Haley's personal image, calling him 'a simple damned fool . . . drugstore cowboy – self-styled philosopher.' Joiner concluded by directly challenging Haley to a physical fight:

Personally, though, if Drugstore Cowboy Haley will park his brace of Gene Autry .45's, we still think we can whip hell out of him in a fair fistfight – Constitution or no Constitution.²⁰¹

Joiner was responding directly to the tough male persona that Haley had nurtured. The persona that he chose was that of the gentleman cowboy who still, if riled, is capable of reverting back to the violent code of the West. The implication behind Joiner's challenge is that he saw Haley's image as window dressing which, if put to the test, would be exposed as false. Haley did not reply to Joiner's challenge.

He did, however, respond to the challenge (at least verbally) in a question posed by representatives of the CIO during his 1956 campaign.²⁰² When asked his position on labour, Haley responded in classic B-movie western fashion. He is reported to have said:

If on my ranch a bunch of hands quit and you fellows try to come up there trying to interfere with the people I then hire to flank a bunch of yearlings on my land, I'll meet you at the fence with a .32, and, if necessary, I'll draw a bead on you and rim a shell and leave you lying on the fence line. And if that isn't plain enough, I'll make it plainer.²⁰³

Haley made this stereotypically aggressive statement following a public meeting in

front of an array of journalists. Given the openness of the venue it is reasonable to assume that his purpose was to air his views and his persona to the press in the certain knowledge that it would then be reported to the Texas electorate.²⁰⁴ By behaving in such a manner, Haley was deliberately seeking to confirm the connection between his brand of rightist politics and the classically Western, 'no-nonsense' brand of male behaviour. The image of white Texas and its manhood was of crucial importance to Haley. However, if the image was to retain the potency that Haley desired, it needed to be constantly reaffirmed as being fundamentally individualistic and aggressively independent. There was no place in Haley's vision of white Texas masculinity for the kind of collectivism represented by the CIO, despite the fact that many thousands of Texas workers were then engaged in a struggle to organise under the most intimidating circumstances and displaying qualities of courage and fortitude that matched anything that Haley could recall from the long-gone days of the Texas frontier. It is instructive in terms of his narrow political perspective, especially in relation to the image of Texas manhood, that Haley could not recognise the male fortitude of the pioneers in the CIO organisers of a later time.

Haley believed that his political, social and cultural viewpoint was synonymous with the male ideal and that opposing views were tainted with maleness of a lesser order. An example of this can be seen in an address he gave in 1951. Entitled 'Patriotism in our own Hour of Decision,' the speech contains the following:

The pink tint of liberalism – of progressive education – was everywhere in effective flower. The foggy fulminations of John Dewey, which . . . condoned force to repress individualism, were in full vogue. Through the messianic left-wing crusade fro[m] Columbia Teachers College, with notable help from the

effeminate halls of Harvard . . . the admirers of the [S]oviet system all but took charge.²⁰⁵

In Haley's estimation, therefore, masculinity and anti-communism were one and the same thing. Haley could allege that his opponents and their beliefs, which he termed 'the degenerate ideals of this liberal cult',²⁰⁶ were effeminate or homosexual since he remained safely behind the indestructible heterosexual façade provided by stereotypical white Texas masculinity. He was never ambiguous in his disgust for anything that fell short of his standards of maleness and in Haley's world the white Texas male icon could never be anything other than heterosexual and politically conservative. In a typical speech given in the atypical setting of the Annual Dinner of the Coppini Academy of Fine Arts in San Antonio in 1961, Haley stated:

Prejudice? Yes! Long before I had the remotest notion of their sad perversions, my prejudice against sissy men and mannish women, kept me at a completely safe and respectable distance.²⁰⁷

Although there is no reason to believe that Haley was ever anything but an honest spokesman for his own version of heterosexual prejudice, such was his admiration of all the qualities of maleness that in different circumstances or in a different milieu, Haley's adulation of the basic qualities of men might well have been construed as homoerotic.

Haley's above-mentioned description of Eugene Barker points to his emphasis on the positive value of a certain type of maleness. The most overused word in Haley's description of his former mentor was 'rugged', an adjective not normally used to

describe an academic, and clearly an attempt by Haley to distance Barker, whom he admired inordinately, from those 'lesser' men who surrounded him. Barker was a political conservative in a faculty that was overwhelmingly liberal. Following his personal experiences with liberal academia and academics in the 1930s and 1940s, Haley had distanced himself from those who had decided to live a life surrounded by books. Academia in itself was not Haley's problem; his rancour was sparked by those who disagreed with him politically. In 1937, he had written to Dobie:

When I see a bunch of intellectual bastards doing everything they can to destroy the ideals that have made us a virile race, and to sink the liberties that mankind has been struggling for through the ages, I know that finally I'll do violence to somebody if he has enough manhood to resent an insult.²⁰⁸

Again, Haley's emphasis fell solidly on those male attributes that had been closely associated with the circumstances that existed in early Texas. In an interview with the *Dallas Morning News* in 1936, following his departure from the University of Texas, Haley asserted his belief in his ability to make his way in the world. As was his way, he made his pronouncement in terms that unambiguously set out his views on Texas and gender, asserting that 'The Texas tradition is not one of coddled men and pampered women, but of virile self-reliance.'²⁰⁹

Haley's life was marked by his uncompromising opinions on masculinity, and his failure to understand the less-than-rugged necessities of academia would not deter him from keeping the faith with his preferred model of maleness. After all, by the time Haley finally left the University of Texas, his concentration was fully taken up with his opposition to the inroads being made by Roosevelt's New Deal into the lives

of individualistic Texans. It was, therefore, important to him that his version of Texas maleness remained at the forefront of Texas consciousness in order that the fight against the government was waged in a suitably 'rugged' Texas fashion.

Haley's version of masculinity is evident in all of his work, whether it is historical, personal or political. He wrote an inordinate amount on the lives of individual white Texas men and all of these men had, or were given, personal qualities that Haley admired greatly. The traits that attracted Haley to them were those that corresponded with his personal male creed. Examples are not difficult to locate. For example, on Ben Ficklin, pioneer mailman, Haley wrote:

A century ago on the distant borders of America, courage accepted the challenge of distance and danger, and rode with the mighty compulsions of honor pride and duty to see that the mail went through.²¹⁰

On the gunman and lawman, Jeff Milton, he wrote:

More remarkable than that perfect physical combination of muscle, eye, and brain, which, coupled with courage, made great gunmen, however, was the civilised code of honor that sustained him.²¹¹

On Charles Schreiner, storekeeper:

Fired with abundant energy and keen and nimble faculties, he had all the impatience with sloth and carelessness that is typical of well-ordered, self-disciplined lives, as well as of men of successful pursuits and broad affairs.²¹²

And on Dave McCormick, pioneer:

He is vigorous and durable, as straight as a dogwood arrow and as tough as a rawhide hobble. In keeping with his physical virility his mind is clear and active; his speech is low, yet certain; and his eyes are clear and cool, as cool and bright as burnished steel.²¹³

This is just a small selection of the tributes paid by Haley to those white men who, he claimed, were at the sharp end of the creation of early Texas white civilisation. The ideal man, the Texas superman in Haley's estimation, had a mix of physical and mental attributes that complemented his strength, courage, honour, pride and abundant self-discipline and led, inevitably Haley believed, to success in life.

The most obvious consequence of Haley's construction of Texas maleness was its adoption and nurture by those with power. Haley, for all of his professed individualism, was employed and assisted throughout his life by a variety of big-money interests, most of whom used his political fervour and skill as a political activist as an effective tool for advancing their own vision of society. Houston Harte, millionaire founder of the Harte-Hanks newspaper chain, bankrolled many of Haley's ventures.²¹⁴ Haley also worked as ranch manager for various rich and influential owners, including L. L. Dent, W. A. Wrather and J. M. West. He also wrote many articles for *The Shamrock*, the magazine of the Amarillo-based Shamrock Oil and Gas Company. In 1954, a series of adverts that Haley and others had written for Shamrock was brought together in book form under the title, *The Story of Shamrock*. Texas historian Al Lowman described the adverts as follows:

Each of these ads began by recounting the history of an Old West trail and ended by extolling the virtues of Shamrock's trail master gasoline.²¹⁵

The Story of Shamrock moulded Haley's take on life, including the foundation of his work – the historical link between maleness and the creation of Texas – to suit the requirements of his benefactors.

Haley described his relationship with Shamrock in the prologue to his 1963 work, *Men of Fiber*, a work that the company supported financially. He wrote:

I am grateful too for that long association with that fine example of modern scientific progress and old-time American enterprise, The Shamrock Oil and Gas Corporation of Amarillo.²¹⁶

At a meeting of the Natural Gas Association of America in 1951, Haley spoke on what he saw as the mood of defeatism pervading America in the face of communism and the United Nations. He said:

This philosophy of futility is utterly unworthy of the rugged race that converted this western wilderness from a cow-chip economy to the fantastic comforts based on the chemical catalytics of natural gas in one man's lifetime.²¹⁷

Haley clearly believed that one of the things achieved by the rugged individualism of Texas maleness in the nineteenth century was the creation of an environment that, among other things, would aid the progress of the gas industry.

His 1959 work, *Erle P. Halliburton: Genius with Cement*, was a fawning biography of the head of the famous oil company. Haley again equated the endeavour of the industrial capitalist with the frontiersman. He described Halliburton and his enterprise in the following terms:

This man and his idea were tested and proven by the rigorous standards of an exacting industrial age. With the help of many individualistic hands, the idea survived and flourished in a capitalistic, which is to say, a free and competitive economy, and grew into a vast and dynamic enterprise.²¹⁸

This extract goes a long way toward an explanation of Haley's comparison between the maleness required on the frontier and the masculine virtues needed in industry. Both, in Haley's estimation, required the same qualities. Many of Haley's frontier heroes, after all, were those men who had created vast capitalistic ranching enterprises out of the Texas wilderness. In that context, the resemblance between Haley's frontier heroes and his industrial ones is understandable.

The Texas male image was reckoned by some to have been taken over in the late 1940s and 1950s by the figure of the oilman. Certainly, Eastern-based magazines and newspapers in this period played heavily on the image of the Texas male as being rich and garish. One observer declared that the presence of the rich oilman could have a catastrophic impact on the social relevance of the whole Texas image:

Oil and diamonds have corrupted the tall, lean knight of the plains. The face is no longer that of the noble savage; it has degenerated into the features of an ape-like primitive. The figure is short and corpulent from overfeeding upon an

undeserved affluence. The Texan is no longer a folk ideal, and if he is not an 'ideal,' his status as a folk hero is lost.²¹⁹

Webb and Dobie recognised that the intrusion of the capitalist entrepreneur into the realm of Texas mythology would sully the pure image and result in such negativity. Haley, on the other hand, ~~actively sought to equate the enterprise of the capitalist with the endeavour of the earlier Texas hero~~ who, in his own way, with the help of the main planks of the capitalist system (bankers, lawyers and insurers), had created vast capitalistic enterprises in Texas. Many of the men whom Haley celebrated in his biographical writing represented the foundations of the dominant white Texas capitalist structure. M. E. Bradford, comparing Haley's works to a Greek epic, wrote in relation to the status of Haley's male characters that:

Here, of course, is another epic analogy. For Haley's chosen exemplars are either founders or models of their frontier milieu. They make or sustain something, make it up for themselves.²²⁰

Haley's heroes included George Littlefield (banker), Charles Goodnight (rancher), Jeff Milton and Bob Beverley (both lawmen), Erle P. Halliburton (oilman), James D. Hamlin (judge), Charles Schreiner (merchant), Ranald MacKenzie (soldier), and Ray C. Johnson (lawyer). His adulation of these characters, and his belief that they represented the personification of Texas, is evident in the title of his book on Mississippi-born George Littlefield, banker, rancher, Confederate soldier and Regent of the University of Texas. Haley gave his study of Littlefield the simple and illuminating title, *George W. Littlefield, Texan*.

It was a surprise to some when Haley related the story of J. Harvey Bailey, a bank robber, who for most of his life was incarcerated in the American prison system. Haley described Bailey in the same glowing terms he reserved for all of his more conventional subjects. Bailey, he wrote, was ‘a man of rare intelligence and proven steel.’ The moral of Haley’s take on Bailey’s life was that ‘crime does not pay. You do!’²²¹ Haley further tells us that the basic character of strong men ‘is not destroyed by rigorous systems of just punishment.’²²² Bailey, therefore, is used as an example of how strong and self-reliant maleness can overcome even the sternest of tests. The significance of this for Haley was that the male qualities of the bank robber were similar to those of the rancher or the business entrepreneur in that they represented an independent, non-federal version of male fortitude.

Haley’s attachment to the Texas establishment was not confined to rich benefactors. He also fostered relationships with important figures on the Texas political scene and in the Establishment Texas press. Aside from his close relationship with Houston Harte, Haley tried to curry favour with those press barons whom he most admired. In 1935, he wrote to G. B. Dealey of the *Dallas News* asking that the paper maintain the ‘finest traditions of courageous and impartial comment’ with regard to the New Deal. His tone was obsequious:

For many years I have considered *The Dallas News* the leading cultural institution in the state of Texas, and I have so commented upon it in the work that has carried me to every part of the State . . . and you are well aware of the personal esteem which I hold for many members of your organisation.²²³

Haley understood that, in order to fight the New Deal, he needed the support and

favour of powerful conservative newspapermen such as Dealey. However, whereas his relationship with Harte was close and personal, his dealings with men like Dealey and Jesse Jones of the *Houston Chronicle* relied on formal politeness. In these circumstances Haley's tone was perhaps understandable.

His political aims were not dissimilar to some of the more extreme conservative governors of the state, including Allan Shivers and 'Pappy' Lee O'Daniel. Both of these Texas governors recognised that Haley cut the kind of figure and promoted the kind of ideal that was favourable to their political outlook. Haley was reckoned by many to be too overtly extreme to hold public office and his worth for compatible politicians lay in his behind-the-scenes activities as a political pamphleteer and provocateur. Nevertheless, O'Daniel tried to appoint Haley to the State Sanitary Livestock Commission in 1941, but a State Senate wary of Haley's continued anti-Roosevelt position overruled the appointment. Shivers appointed Haley as a Regent of Texas Technical College in 1955, an appointment that was to create mayhem in 1957 when Haley was directly behind the sacking of two 'liberal' professors.²²⁴

The correspondence between Haley and these two members of the political establishment shows that they had much in common. For example, when Governor of Texas in 1941, O' Daniel wrote the following to his 'Dear Friend' Haley: 'I deeply appreciated your splendid support of my proposal to regulate strikes and lockouts affecting National Defence Industries in the State during the pending emergencies.'²²⁵ And a year later, as a member of the United States Senate, he wrote: 'I am glad that we are in agreement in reference to labor leader racketeers.'²²⁶ Shivers wrote to Haley in 1950 asking for what Haley termed in his reply, 'the names of studious, patriotic citizens who might help in a study of governmental problems in Texas.'²²⁷ Haley duly supplied the politician with his list of suitably conservative

recommendations.

The association between the Texas Establishment and J. Evetts Haley gave the historian's political and written work a societal relevance and influence that would have been unthinkable had Haley been a complete outsider. When Haley's 1964 polemic on Lyndon Johnson, *A Texan Looks at Lyndon: A Study in Illegitimate Power*, ended important areas of patronage, not least by the Shamrock Oil Co and Houston Harte, his star was on the wane. Haley wrote to Harte a month prior to Kennedy's assassination in Dallas and concluded his letter with the kind of strident statement of masculine intent that had bonded the men over the previous fifteen years. Haley wrote: 'Texas and our section were taken and made by the middle-of-the-roads. They were taken by real men who believe in the eternal verities.'²²⁸ This manner of male bonding, however, was not enough to see the relationship through the controversy caused by Haley's diatribe against Johnson. Without the support of the Texas Establishment, Haley's influence was eroded.²²⁹ By 1964, especially in the wake of Kennedy's killing in Dallas, the kind of right-wing macho image offered by Haley was generally deemed to be suspect.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, Haley courted organisations and individuals that were amongst the most extreme in Texas political life. Men such as Tom Anderson, Dan Smoot and General Edwin Walker epitomised the quasi-fascistic face of extremist Texas, an aspect of the Texas conservative character that was to catch the imagination of American writers and the film industry in the wake of the Kennedy killing. All of these men, who were instrumental in changing the perception of the image of Texas, were closely linked to Haley.²³⁰ These associations cost Haley dear. The Texas establishment, although rigidly and dogmatically conservative in all areas of social existence, shied away from overt association with those on the lunatic fringe.

Covert financial backing for anti-communist, anti-labour or anti-integration organisations may well have been commonplace. However, the violent overthrow of government or political assassination was not on the agenda of a Texas ruling elite that were more concerned with finding a place at the table of American elitist opportunity than in destroying it.

It is ironic, therefore, that when Texas most needed the image of its manhood to be stabilised, one of the men who played such a key role in reconstructing the image in the first place should do all in his power to undermine the highest profile Texan in America. It was a measure of Haley's priorities that he should consider it more important to attack Johnson than to tread carefully through the wreckage of the Texas image. Of course, it could be that those, like Haley, on the extreme right of Texas politics believed that the killing of Kennedy in Dallas did no harm whatever to the Texas image and that the fundamental damage to Texas and its image was done by Johnson's reaction following the assassination. Haley wrote that the events in Dallas had been 'unspeakably evil', although this evil had been eclipsed by Johnson's subsequent mistrust and misrepresentation of the American people. He continued:

but the horrible perversion of morality and of justice through the mass indictment of millions of Americans was far worse. Did president Johnson rise in righteous concern to rectify this slander of a great people stricken in anguish and grief? On the contrary he abetted it.²³¹

Haley's fundamental gripe was that Johnson was guilty of cowardice and of not recognising that it was the left that was culpable for Kennedy's death and not the right. That he did not say so loudly, clearly and quickly, marked Johnson as a traitor

in Haley's estimation.

Haley's attack on Lyndon Johnson hit at the very heart of the President's character. As the subtitle of the book suggests, Haley accused Johnson of most varieties of character weakness and every misdemeanour that a professional politician can commit. These included financial and electoral corruption, blackmail, wide-scale bullying and the worst crime that any politician could engage in, at least in Haley's eyes, the practise of socialism. Haley accused Johnson of weakness in the following terms: "

Nothing in Johnson's public record and statements emphasised any abiding spiritual and moral creed, nor dedication to any firm political and philosophical principle.²³²

Significantly, however, he also attempted to distance the faults of Johnson, the man, from his Texas background. As a creator of a version of the Texas image, it was important to Haley that Johnson's colossal and influential masculine image (he was after all the President of the United States) should not be allowed to detract from the idea of Texas maleness that Haley had fostered.

In the first paragraph of his introduction to *A Texan Looks at Lyndon*, Haley wrote:

Johnson . . . is not so much a product of Texas as of the strangely deranged times that have set the stage for his ambitious desires, his vanity and monumental egotism, his vindictive nature and his evil genius . . . Johnson emerged, not as a product of the rough but sunlit Southwestern hills, but of

political sophistication, cynicism and expediency.²³³

Haley was, therefore, careful to exonerate Texas from any blame in the creation of Johnson's character. The importance of the Texas image was too significant in Haley's viewpoint to see it sullied by association with a man he regarded as an 'evil genius', even if he was the most powerful man in the country.

Haley understood that Johnson had created a Texas image that was recognised across America and the world. He believed that Johnson was guilty of image-making for purposes of political expediency and accused Johnson of this. He wrote:

After a long and skilful effort to divorce himself of all suspicion of 'provincialism' and to emerge with the image of a national figure, the first ironical and inescapable political necessity facing Johnson . . . was to re-establish himself at home as a Texan. For unless the LBJ brand was that of a favorite son for President, he would cut a poor figure elsewhere.²³⁴

Haley, of course, as a skilled user of image as a political tool, was well-placed to make his accurate criticism of Johnson's ability for metamorphosis. In this comment, Haley also indicated his belief in the importance of a Texas politician or public figure having an image that was sound and readily recognised on home territory.

Haley himself presented an image that was designed to inform his fellow Texans of both his background and intent. Historian Joe B. Frantz, in recalling his first experience of Haley, also informs us as to the positive effect that Haley's image had on those who saw him. Frantz wrote:

This long lean booted figure with a voice so typically Texan that not even Hollywood could have matched it uncoiled himself and faced the audience. He was good-looking, erect, with the clear blue eyes of a man who had found his place in the world. He began to read and his voice fascinated me.²³⁵

In his work and in his personal bearing, Haley was consumed by an image of white Texas masculinity that conformed to the classic Texas stereotype. He was also the most obvious example of a Texas historian who moulded this potent image around his own particular brand of political thought. The attitude that Haley offered to the Texas public was designed to display leadership based on the basic qualities of conservative Texas.

Like Dobie and Webb, as well as other Texas writers of the period such as George Sessions Perry and Fred Gipson, Haley tried hard to convert his book-based image of Texas manhood on to the cinema screen. It was, however, the image that Haley projected to those outside of the state that lay between him and the lucrative contracts on offer from Hollywood. His uncompromising macho image had failed to get him elected by the people of Texas in 1956, and it was the same image that prevented his written material being transferred onto film. Throughout the 1950s, Haley worked closely with his publisher, Savoie Lottinville of the University of Oklahoma Press, in the pursuance of a lucrative film deal. Their contact in New York was Annie Laurie Willams who, in 1951, according to Lottinville, was working with Leo Katcher in Hollywood looking for a picture deal from Haley's book on Jeff Milton. Lottinville wrote to Haley telling him of their hopes that a series of films might result. He wrote:

They are looking for somebody like Bill Boyd who can carry a series for years

and years, even decorate gloves, blue jeans, and boots and spurs with the Jeff Milton name, no doubt. If you all begin eating Jeff Milton Wheaties a couple of years from now, it will be all because you wrote a very good book on that great man.²³⁶

In 1954, Lottinville again corresponded with Haley on the same subject, although on this occasion the prognosis was less optimistic. Lottinville quoted straight from Williams on the difficulties that she claimed she was facing with Haley's book. The reason given for Williams not telling Haley directly was that the information was too sensitive. Lottinville, claiming that he was quoting straight from Williams, told Haley the following:

She said that your political opinion was pretty well known in the television and movie worlds, and that, confidentially, there were so many Commies at work in both, that she didn't want to have you hooked up with somebody who wasn't entirely to your liking, and who might cause you trouble, grief, and inconvenience at a later date . . . One of the reliable people upon whom she could count for the kind of working script that would not introduce anything offensive to Democratic principles is a man who worked for Radio Free Europe. . . who because of his anti-Communist position, is having a hell of a time getting a job in the New York area . . . I would hold this information about the Communists, and her warning, in confidence, because merely to mention this kind of information would cause these filthy people to gang up on Annie Laurie, and after watching what they are doing in New York, I am fully convinced that they could make real trouble for anybody they chose to single

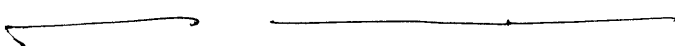
out. Now, isn't this a hell of a pass?²³⁷

Whether this was the real story of Williams' failure to secure a contract for Haley or not, the fact remains that Haley's image was strong enough to be either a factor in his treatment, or an excuse to be used to fob him off.²³⁸

The connection with Annie Laurie Williams never really paid off for Haley and by the mid-1960s he was still trying to sell his idea to Hollywood. This time he placed his faith in connections that would not be hindered by the threat of leftist bias. A letter to Haley from his friend and fellow right-winger, Tom Anderson, indicates that Haley was seeking help from political allies. Anderson wrote:

I will be glad to ask some of my friends (I am bragging) in California to try to find ways to get to John Wayne about the Milton book, if you think it advisable. I imagine that I can find a good Conservative out there who would be willing to ask Wayne to at least talk with you on the telephone, or read the book or something.²³⁹

Haley's version of the Texas image never found its way directly onto the screen. The essence of what he had to impart with regard to white Texas masculinity was confined to his books, articles that he wrote for newspapers and magazines, and his political activism. Nonetheless, from the late 1920s to the election of Lyndon Johnson to the Presidency in 1964, Haley personified a version of white Texas maleness that represented an aggressively loud, visible and instantly recognisable presence in the state.



- ¹ Walter L. Buenger and Robert A. Calvert, eds., *Texas Through Time: Evolving Interpretations* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), p. 312.
- ² Larry McMurtry, *In a Narrow Grave: Essays on Texas* (New York: Touchstone, 1989, first published in 1968), pp. 31-54.
- ³ See the observations of John Graves, Elmer Kelton and William Goyen in Patrick Bennett, *Talking with Texas Writers: Twelve Interviews* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1980), pp. 81, 190, 236.
- ⁴ Ronnie Dugger, ed., *Three Men in Texas: Bedichek, Webb, and Dobie* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), p. xix. For another politician's view of Webb, see Lyndon Johnson's glowing testimony to the influence of Webb in the foreword to Webb, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000, first published in 1935), pp. ix-xi.
- ⁵ Joe B. Frantz, 'Remembering Walter Prescott Webb,' *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 92 (1988), p. 18.
- ⁶ Tom Pilkington, *State of Mind: Texas Literature and Culture* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press), p. 18.
- ⁷ Don Graham, 'J. Frank Dobie: A Reappraisal,' *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 92 (1988), p. 1. See also Lon Tinkle, *An American Original: The Life of J. Frank Dobie* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983, first published in 1979); Winston Bode, *A Portrait of Pancho: The Life of a Great Texan, J. Frank Dobie* (Austin: Pemberton Press, 1965); Francis Edward Abernathy, *J. Frank Dobie* (Austin: Steck-Vaughn, 1967).
- ⁸ McMurtry, *In a Narrow Grave*, p. 51. So impressed with aspects of Haley's book on Goodnight was McMurtry that he appropriated the story of how Goodnight transported his dead partner back to Texas for burial for his best-selling novel *Lonesome Dove* (1986).
- ⁹ J. Evetts Haley, *Charles Goodnight: Cowman and Plainsman* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000, first published in 1935).
- ¹⁰ Chandler A. Robinson, ed., *J. Evetts Haley and the Passing of the Old West* (Austin: Jenkins, 1978), p. 112.
- ¹¹ Kenneth B. Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Texas: Centennial '36* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987), p. 303.
- ¹² Mimi Swartz, 'Texas vs. The World! Yes, they hate us. Should we care?' *Texas Monthly*, July 2004, pp. 78-83.
- ¹³ Ragsdale, *The Year America Discovered Texas*, p. xii.
- ¹⁴ For an indication of the viewpoint of Smith and Dugger toward Dobie see the *Texas Observer*, 24 July 1964, following Dobie's death. McMurtry's opinion of Dobie's contribution to Texas literature is summed up in his book *In a Narrow Grave: Essays on Texas* (New York: Touchstone, 1968), pp. 31-54.
- ¹⁵ Walter L. Buenger and Robert A. Calvert, eds., *Texas Through Time: Evolving Interpretations* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), p. 22.
- ¹⁶ McMurtry, *In a Narrow Grave*, p. 50.
- ¹⁷ Willam A. Owens, *Three Friends* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), p. 135.
- ¹⁸ J. Frank Dobie to Allen R. Bosworth, 28 January 1964, Dobie Correspondence, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas. [This file will hereafter be referred to as DC. HRC]

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- ¹⁹ J. Frank Dobie, *Cow People* (London: Hammond, Hammond & Co, 1964), p. 38.
- ²⁰ Lon Tinkle, *An American Original: The Life of J. Frank Dobie* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978) p. 7.
- ²¹ *El Paso Times*, 1 February 1931.
- ²² *Denison Herald*, 6 February 1931.
- ²³ *Texas Weekly*, 31 January 1931.
- ²⁴ E. E. Davis to R. B. Cousins, President of Kingville College, Texas. n.d., DC. HRC.
- ²⁵ J. Frank Dobie to Tom Lea, 10 January 1943, DC. HRC.
- ²⁶ Francis Edward Abernethy, *J. Frank Dobie* (Austin: Steck-Vaughan, 1967), p. 20.
- ²⁷ John D. Young and J. Frank Dobie, *A Vaquero of the Brush Country: The Life and Times of John D. Young* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), p. xiv.
- ²⁸ Buenger and Calvert, *Texas Through Time*, p. xv.
- ²⁹ Young and Dobie, *A Vaquero of the Brush Country*, p. 84.
- ³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 83.
- ³¹ Coppini completed a number of important commissions for the Texas Centennial. These included bronze statues of historical Texas figures Stephen Austin, William B. Travis and Sam Houston which stand in the Texas Hall of State.
- ³² Tinkle, *An American Original*, p. 169.
- ³³ *Houston Press*, 13 April 1936.
- ³⁴ Pompeo Coppini to J. Frank Dobie, 28 June 1935, J. Frank Dobie Papers, 1923-1967, Center for American History, Austin, Texas. [This file will hereafter be referred to as DP. CAH]
- ³⁵ *San Antonio Light*, 19 November 1939.
- ³⁶ *San Antonio Light*, 30 November 1939.
- ³⁷ Pompeo Coppini, *From Dawn to Sunset* (San Antonio: Naylor, 1949), p. 340.
- ³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 340.
- ³⁹ Terry's Texas Rangers were a Texas battalion who fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War.
- ⁴⁰ Tom Lea to J. Frank Dobie, 1 December 1939, DC. HRC.
- ⁴¹ Abernethy, *J. Frank Dobie*, p. 24.
- ⁴² J. Frank Dobie to Tom Lea, 22 December 1944, DC. HRC.
- ⁴³ J. Frank Dobie to Tom Lea, 10 January 1943, DC. HRC.
- ⁴⁴ In a letter to Tom Lea of 27 September 1951, Dobie referred to Dies, whose most notable claim to fame was as first chairman of HUAC from 1938 to 1944, as 'the blackguard'. DC. HRC.

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- ⁴⁵ Tinkle, *An American Original*, p. 201.
- ⁴⁶ See, Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics*, p. 44 for O'Daniel's link to specific business interests.
- ⁴⁷ *Dallas Morning News*, 18 August 1942.
- ⁴⁸ *Dallas Morning News*, 8 November 1942.
- ⁴⁹ *Conroe Courier*, 16 July 1942.
- ⁵⁰ Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics*, p. 43.
- ⁵¹ Tom Lea, Sr. was the father of the writer and artist Tom Lea. He had been Mayor of El Paso from 1915 to 1917 and served as a lawyer for President General Huerta during the Mexican Revolution. Dobie in a letter to his wife Bertha described him as 'one of the most daring and original men I have ever met.' Tinkle, *An American Original*, p. 135.
- ⁵² Tom Lea, Sr. to J. Frank Dobie, 19 August 1942, DC. HRC.
- ⁵³ Young and Dobie, *A Vaquero of the Brush Country*, p. xiii.
- ⁵⁴ *State Observer*, 17 April 1947. Homer Price Rainey was dismissed as president of the University of Texas in 1944. Many issues contributed to his dismissal, however, the most publicized difference between Rainey and the Board of Regents was Rainey's defence of the John Dos Passos trilogy *U.S.A.* (1930-36). See, Ronnie Dugger, *Our Invaded Universities: Form, Reform, and New Starts* (New York: Norton, 1974).
- ⁵⁵ J. Frank Dobie, *A Texan in England* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1990, first published 1946), p. 266.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 101.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 265.
- ⁵⁸ See Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics*, p. 50.
- ⁵⁹ Rodolfo Acuna, *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle toward Liberation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), Chapter 2.
- ⁶⁰ Dobie, *A Texan in England*, p. 220.
- ⁶¹ J. Evetts Haley to J. Frank Dobie, 4 December 1936, DC. HRC.
- ⁶² *The Texas Observer*, 2 February 1962.
- ⁶³ J. Frank Dobie to John Nance Garner, 31 August 1958, DC. HRC.
- ⁶⁴ Handbook of Texas Online. www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles
- ⁶⁵ *New Mexico Quarterly Review*, 13 (Autumn, 1943), pp. 3-21.
- ⁶⁶ J. Frank Dobie to Ralph Yarborough, 18 April 1957, DC. HRC.
- ⁶⁷ J. Frank Dobie to Tom Lea, 18 December 1946, DC. HRC.
- ⁶⁸ J. Frank Dobie, 'The Mexican Vaquero of the Texas Border', *Political and Social Science Quarterly*, 3, no. 1 (June 1927), p. 23.

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- ⁶⁹ Young and Dobie, *A Vaquero of the Brush Country*, p. 162.
- ⁷⁰ J. Frank Dobie, *The Longhorns* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985, first published 1941), pp. 153, 324.
- ⁷¹ Abernethy, *J. Frank Dobie*, p. 24.
- ⁷² J. Frank Dobie to Lon Tinkle, n.d., DC. HRC.
- ⁷³ J. Frank Dobie to Roy Bedicheck, 9 March 1946; Owens, *Three Friends*, p. 178.
- ⁷⁴ J. Frank Dobie to *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 23 September 1958.
- ⁷⁵ Harry Withers to J. Frank Dobie, 27 June 1946, DC. HRC.
- ⁷⁶ Dobie wrote to Frank Baldwin in a letter dated 28 June 1946 stating that he did not 'propose to knuckle to them.' On 5 July 1946, Dobie received a letter from the owner of the *News*, Ted Dealey, thanking him for his decision to reconsider his initial position and confirming that the *News* would continue to publish Dobie's articles free of political content. DC. HRC.
- ⁷⁷ John Bainbridge, *The Super-Americans* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1962), p. 35.
- ⁷⁸ J. Frank Dobie, *The Mustangs* (Edison: Castle Books, 1998, first published 1952), p. xi.
- ⁷⁹ Dobie, *The Longhorns*, pp. 344-45.
- ⁸⁰ J. Frank Dobie, *Rattlesnakes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965), pp. 56-7.
- ⁸¹ J. Frank Dobie to Tom Lea, 1 February 1953, DC. HRC.
- ⁸² Dobie, *Cow People*, p. viii.
- ⁸³ Dobie, *The Longhorns*, p. 276.
- ⁸⁴ *The Texans* was made by Paramount Pictures and was directed by James Hogan starring Randolph Scott and Joan Bennett.
- ⁸⁵ J. Frank Dobie to Walter Prescott Webb, 15 August 1938, DP CAH.
- ⁸⁶ J. Frank Dobie, *Up the Trail From Texas* (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 18.
- ⁸⁷ Winston Bode, *A Portrait of Pancho* (Austin: Pemberton Press, 1965), p. 95.
- ⁸⁸ J. Frank Dobie to Roy Bedicheck, 20 September 1944, DC. HRC.
- ⁸⁹ A letter from Richard Halliday, General Manager of the story department of Paramount Pictures, dated 9 February 1939, indicates that there was at least a degree of interest in producing Dobie's work as a movie. Halliday wrote: 'I'd very much like to see your book, *Apache Gold* and *Yacqui Silver*, to determine whether it has possibilities for a motion picture.' DC. HRC.
- ⁹⁰ Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues in the BFI Film Classics series book *Red River* (2000), states that the 'Early Tales of Texas' echoes Dobie's *Tales of the Old Texas* (presumably she is referring to Dobie's *Tales of Old-Time Texas* which was published in 1955, six years after Hawks' movie was premiered). However, Dobie's early programme of work, *Legends of Texas* (1924), provided the seed for much of his later work including *Tales of Old-Time Texas*.
- ⁹¹ Don Graham, 'J. Frank Dobie: A Reappraisal', *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 92, (1988), p. 29.

⁹² Henry Nash Smith, 'An Enemy of Reactionary Demagogues', *Texas Observer*, 24 July 1964.

⁹³ Abernethy, *J. Frank Dobie*, p. 47. Dobie's poor opinion of the Wayne movie was confirmed in a televised talk with Mody Boatwright. He stated, 'there is no revelation of character in it, and not even adherence to fact.' In Winston Bode, *A Portrait of Pancho*, p. 93.

⁹⁴ *Texas Observer*, 24 July 1964.

⁹⁵ *Texian*, 15 November 1949.

⁹⁶ Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1931), pp. 505. For an insight into the female western experience, see Joyce Gibson Roach, *The Cowgirls* (Lubbock: University of North Texas Press, 1990); Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains* (Lawrence, 1988); Sarah L. Myers, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience, 1800-1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1982); Mark M. Carroll, *Homesteads Ungovernable: Families, Sex, Race, and the Law in Frontier Texas, 1823-1860* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001). For a literary view of the frontier experience of women in Texas, see *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1965).

⁹⁷ Information and details on the Texas Rangers can be found on the following website: <http://www.texasranger.org>

⁹⁸ T. R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2000), p. 602.

⁹⁹ Webb to W. W. Whitman of North Carolina, 15 April 1956, Walter Prescott Webb Papers, Center for American History at Austin, Texas. This source will hereafter be referred to as WP CAH. Willson Whitman had written to Webb on behalf of Crown Publishers of New York with an idea for a book entitled *There is Another South*. Whitman wanted Webb to write a chapter on Texas.

¹⁰⁰ W. P. Webb, 'The South's Call to Greatness: Challenge to all Southerners,' Address given to the Seventh Annual Conference of the Texas Council for Social Studies, San Marcos, 29 June 1959.

¹⁰¹ Walter Prescott Webb, *Divided We Stand: The Crisis of a Frontierless Democracy* (Austin: Acorn Press, 1944), pp. 3-151.

¹⁰² Walter Prescott Webb, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000, first published in 1935), p. 426.

¹⁰³ Henderson Fagen, 'Texas Comes of Age,' *The American Mercury*, June 1936, p. 68.

¹⁰⁴ Walter Prescott Webb, 'Presidential address to the American Historical Association,' 29 December 1959, *American Historical Review*, 64:2 (January 1959), pp. 265-80.

¹⁰⁵ Letter to Colonel E. M. House, 18 October 1926, WP CAH.

¹⁰⁶ Webb, *The Texas Rangers*, p. 513.

¹⁰⁷ For an insight into the specific role of the Rangers in the segregation issue in Mansfield, Texas, in 1956 see Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics*, p. 189. Texas Ranger involvement against Chicano workers is highlighted in Acuna, *Occupied America*, pp. 361-63. Acuna states: 'Anglo authorities protected their privilege through fraud and intimidation at the polls and the use of the Texas Rangers.' David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), similarly accuses the Rangers of doing the dirty work of white land speculators in the border region in the years 1900-1920. pp. 126-27.

¹⁰⁸ Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, p. 474. Fehrenbach's view that the Rangers were forced by necessity into a reputation for extreme toughness by the methods of their opponents is common among Texas historians. See, for example, Oliver Knight's foreword to James B. Gillet's *Six Years With the Texas*

Rangers (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1921), where Knight states, 'Around the Rangers . . . has grown a reputation for tenacity, firmness and quick-triggered summary justice where necessary. The Rangers built that reputation because they had to build it – because Texas was niggardly in maintaining the Rangers, and upon the shoulders of relatively few men fell a heavy responsibility: in the earlier years, of fighting Texas' inveterate enemies, the Indian and the Mexican . . . ' p. ii.

¹⁰⁹ Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, p. 645.

¹¹⁰ Webb, *The Texas Rangers*, p. x. Webb was employed by Johnson in 1959 as a special consultant when he was Senate Majority Leader.

¹¹¹ Webb, *The Texas Rangers*, p. 79.

¹¹² Ibid, pp. 545-46.

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 538.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 544.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p. 544.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 544.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 539.

¹¹⁸ As an example of the anti-Ferguson tone of Webb's writing, see 'Texas Rangers in Eclipse: Present State Administration Has Discredited Force by Policy of Interference With its Duties,' *State Trooper*, vii (January, 1926). His change of heart with the election of Moody is evident in the following article: 'Larger Texas Force: New Governor Expected to Increase Ranger Strength to Combat Conditions of Lawlessness,' *State Trooper*, viii (July, 1927).

¹¹⁹ Webb, *The Texas Rangers*, p. 486. Webb reiterated this position in 1958 when he gave his presidential address to the American Historical Association. See *American Historical Review*, 64:2 (January 1959), pp. 265-80.

¹²⁰ Lewis Nordkys, *The Truth About Texas* (New York, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1957), pp. 254-64.

¹²¹ Acuna, *Occupied America*, p. 23.

¹²² Ibid, p. 27.

¹²³ McMurtry, *In a Narrow Grave*, p. 40.

¹²⁴ Llerena B. Friend, 'W. P. Webb's Texas Rangers,' *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 74 (January 1971), p. 319.

¹²⁵ Ronnie Dugger, ed., *Three Men in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), pp. 116-17.

¹²⁶ Necah Stuart Furman, *Walter Prescott Webb: His Life and Impact* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), p. 47.

¹²⁷ Webb, *The Future of the American Negro*, WP CAH.

¹²⁸ Furman, *Walter Prescott Webb*, p. 114.

¹²⁹ Webb, *Cheeko*, WP CAH.

¹³⁰ Webb, *The Texas Rangers*, p. 14.

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- ¹³¹ The Texas Ku Klux Klan was confident enough in 1924 to field a candidate, Felix Robertson of Dallas, in the race to be governor.
- ¹³² Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, p. 693.
- ¹³³ 'Jack' to Walter Prescott Webb, 2 August 1936, WP CAH. 'Jack' was a regular correspondent of Webb's from around the mid-1920s to the late 1930s. His surname may have been Stuart and he may have been Webb's cousin or nephew.
- ¹³⁴ Mrs Gertrude Hills to Walter Prescott Webb, 25 October 1936, WP CAH.
- ¹³⁵ Foley, *The White Scourge*, pp. 92-117.
- ¹³⁶ *New York Times*, 16 November 1935.
- ¹³⁷ John Coffee Hays to Walter Prescott Webb, 21 January 1936, WP CAH.
- ¹³⁸ Zane Grey, *The Ranger* (1929), from Jon E. Lewis, ed., *The Giant Book of the Western* (Paragon Press, 1995), pp. 188-89.
- ¹³⁹ O. Henry, *The Caballero's Way*, in Jon E. Lewis, ed., *The Giant Book of the Western*. pp. 36-48.
- ¹⁴⁰ Webb, *The Texas Rangers*, p. 466. For further details of the Brownsville incident, see Ann J. Lane, *The Brownsville Affair: National Crisis and Black Reaction* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1971).
- ¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 467.
- ¹⁴² *Ibid*, p. 467.
- ¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 469.
- ¹⁴⁴ Dugger, *Three Men in Texas*, p. 102.
- ¹⁴⁵ For a rundown of some of Webb's business investments, see Furman, *Walter Prescott Webb*, p. 153. In *Super-Americans*, John Bainbridge has the following description of Webb: 'Small, leathery and shrewd (he has done very well on the side in real-estate),' p. 298.
- ¹⁴⁶ Webb, *The Great Plains*, pp. 481-82.
- ¹⁴⁷ Webb, 'The American West, Perpetual Mirage,' *Harper's Magazine* (May 1957)
- ¹⁴⁸ Webb, *The Great Plains*, p. 464.
- ¹⁴⁹ In a letter to C. C. Chesher, 11 April 1930, Webb 'overwhelmingly recommends with no reservations' the following books as the best works on cattle trails: *Trail Drivers of Texas* by G. W. Saunders, *The Log of a Cowboy* by Andy Adams and J. Evetts Haley's *The XIT Ranch of Texas*, WP CAH.
- ¹⁵⁰ Emerson Hough, 'Sam Houston,' *Texas Talks; An Illustrated Magazine of Progress and Development*, 15 June 1904.
- ¹⁵¹ Emerson Hough, 'Are Americans People?' *The Storyworld and Photodramatist*, Vol. 4, n. 12. (June 1923). This was Hough's last piece of writing before his death.
- ¹⁵² Stuart Henry, 'Maligning Our Neighbors in Fiction: Faults of our Wild West Stories.' *The Literary Digest International Book Review* (November 1923).
- ¹⁵³ Furman, *Walter Prescott Webb*, p. 97.

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- ¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 99.
- ¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 98.
- ¹⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 98.
- ¹⁵⁷ Owens, *Three Friends*, p. 137.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Austin American Statesman*, 29 June 1939.
- ¹⁵⁹ Furman, *Walter Prescott Webb*, p. 143.
- ¹⁶⁰ Walter Prescott Webb to W. W. Whitman, 15 April 1956, WP CAH.
- ¹⁶¹ Houghton Mifflin and Co. (Publishers) to Webb, 25 January 1936. On 19 May 1936, Webb received confirmation from the same source that he would be paid a total of \$8,800 after commission was deducted. WP CAH.
- ¹⁶² Walter Prescott Webb, *Texan's Story*, pp. 195-197, unpublished manuscript, WP CAH.
- ¹⁶³ *The Texas Rangers* (1936) was re-made in 1949 as *The Streets of Laredo*. In this version the male lead (this time his name was Dawkins) was portrayed as a more vulnerable character. This related to a change in studio attitudes in the intervening years and, indeed, a change in social emphasis between the pre-War attitudes to Texan men and those of the post-War period.
- ¹⁶⁴ William B. Ruggles for the *Dallas Morning News*, 3 November 1935. The film *Rio Rita* (1929) was a comic musical directed by Luther Reed and starred John Boles and Bebe Daniels.
- ¹⁶⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶⁶ Raymond Durnat and Scott Simmon, *King Vidor, American* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 187.
- ¹⁶⁷ Paramount Pictures Inc. to Walter Prescott Webb, 5 October 1936, WP CAH.
- ¹⁶⁸ Paramount Pictures Inc. to Walter Prescott Webb, 7 October 1936, WP CAH.
- ¹⁶⁹ Ralph Jester to Walter Prescott Webb, 27 October 1936, WP CAH.
- ¹⁷⁰ Ralph Jester to Webb, 11 November 1936, WP CAH.
- ¹⁷¹ LeBaron R. Barker, Jr. on behalf of Houghton Mifflin Company to Walter Prescott Webb, 20 May 1936, WP CAH.
- ¹⁷² Ibid.
- ¹⁷³ Houghton Mifflin Company to Walter Prescott Webb, 19 August 1936, WP CAH.
- ¹⁷⁴ Houghton Mifflin to Walter Prescott Webb, 15 May 1936, WP CAH.
- ¹⁷⁵ *American Historical Review*, 64:2 (January 1959), pp. 265-80.
- ¹⁷⁶ 'Jack' to Walter Prescott Webb, 25 October 1936, WP CAH.
- ¹⁷⁷ Walter Prescott Webb to Jane, 15 February 1916, WP CAH.
- ¹⁷⁸ Dugger, *Three Men in Texas*, p. 101.

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- ¹⁷⁹ Webb, *The Great Plains*, p. 503.
- ¹⁸⁰ Buenger and Calvert, *Texas Through Time*, p. 310.
- ¹⁸¹ J. Evetts Haley, *When School Was Out* (Midland: The Nita Stewart Haley Memorial Library, 1989), p. 7.
- ¹⁸² M. E. Bradford, 'The Care and Keeping of Memory: J. Evetts Haley and a Plutarchian Biography,' *Southwestern American Literature*, Vol. 3, 1973, p. 69.
- ¹⁸³ Taken from a radio interview with Bill Wilkerson, 5 December 1982. Transcript of this interview was found in the Nita Stewart Haley Memorial Library, Midland, Texas. [This source will hereafter be referred to as HML].
- ¹⁸⁴ Bill Modisett, *J. Evetts Haley: A True Texas Legend* (Midland: Staked Plains Press, 1996), p. 53.
- ¹⁸⁵ Don E. Carlton, *Who Shot the Bear?: J. Evetts Haley and the Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center* (Austin: Wind River Press, 1984).
- ¹⁸⁶ In a letter to H. Y. Benedict, 24 August 1936, Haley declared that he had been 'fired' for political reasons. J. Evetts Haley, General Correspondence, HML.
- ¹⁸⁷ Haley often quoted the line from Oswald Splengler's *The Hour of Decision*: 'politics is the greatest pursuit of man.' Bill Modisett, *J. Evetts Haley*, p. 55.
- ¹⁸⁸ Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics*, p. 198.
- ¹⁸⁹ Haley is reported to have stated, on the subject of school text books, that 'the stressing of both sides of a controversy only confuses the young and encourages them to make snap judgments based on insufficient evidence. Until they are old enough to understand both sides of a question, they should be taught only the American side.' Jack Nelson and Gene Roberts, Jr., *The Censors and the Schools* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1963), p. 121.
- ¹⁹⁰ J. Evetts Haley, *Geo W. Littlefield, Texan* (Norman: n. p., 1943), p. vii.
- ¹⁹¹ J. Evetts Haley, 'Fighting Spirit,' an address given at the West Texas State Teachers College, 7 March 1925, HML.
- ¹⁹² Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas*, p. 224.
- ¹⁹³ J. Evetts Haley, *The New Deal and the Negro Vote* (Austin: n. p., 1936), p. 3.
- ¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 8
- ¹⁹⁵ *Dallas Morning News*, 27 July 1956.
- ¹⁹⁶ *Dallas Morning News*, 13 June 1956.
- ¹⁹⁷ *The Daily Texan*, 3 August 1941. In the same report, Haley's proposal was attacked by the key figures in the University's Latin-American programme. Dr Carlos E. Casteneda stated that the idea was 'absurd and without basis of reason.'
- ¹⁹⁸ Article in *Parade*, 17 January 1982; Letter from Haley to Robinson, 10 February 1982, HML.
- ¹⁹⁹ *Saturday Evening Post*, 8 December 1934.
- ²⁰⁰ *Texans for America News*, Volume 1, No. 6 (October 1958).

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- ²⁰¹ *The Ralls Banner*, 19 July 1957.
- ²⁰² The CIO is the Congress of Industrial Organizations, a prominent American trade union.
- ²⁰³ The Lynn Landrum Column, 'Thinking Out Loud', *Dallas Morning News*, 10 June 1956.
- ²⁰⁴ On another occasion, Haley and his son were involved in a brawl with a professor of history at West Texas State College at Canyon, Texas. The fight occurred after the showing of the film 'Operation Abolition' when the professor, J. W. Cooke, asserted that the implication of the film was that anyone who disagreed with the HUAC was a communist sympathiser. Haley was later quoted in the press confirming the fight. Nelson and Roberts, *The Censors and the Schools*, p. 120.
- ²⁰⁵ Address presented at the Panhandle-Plains regional meeting of the Natural Gasoline Association of America, the Herring Hotel, Amarillo, Texas, 20 November 1951.
- ²⁰⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁰⁷ From 'Painting and Prejudice: a Comment on the Nature of Degeneracy,' a critical paper read to the annual dinner of the Coppini Academy of Fine Arts, San Antonio, January 1961.
- ²⁰⁸ J. Evetts Haley to J. Frank Dobie, 28 February 1937, DP CAH.
- ²⁰⁹ *Dallas Morning News*, 13 September 1936.
- ²¹⁰ J. Evetts Haley, 'Ben Ficklin, Pioneer Mailman,' *Shamrock* (Spring 1959).
- ²¹¹ J. Evetts Haley, *Jeff Milton: A Good Man with a Gun* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1948), p. vii.
- ²¹² J. Evetts Haley, *Charles Schreiner: General Merchandise, the Story of a Country Store* (Kerrville, n. p., 1969), p. 57.
- ²¹³ J. Evetts Haley, 'Dave McCormick, Pioneer,' *Ranch Romances*, 14 July 1934, p. 228.
- ²¹⁴ Harte's involvement with Haley is outlined in Al Lowman, 'The Rancher, The Printer and the Tycoon,' *West Texas Historical Association Yearbook*, 1993. Harte gave money to Shivers' campaign in 1952 and is named as an 'Establishment donor' in Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics*, p. 163.
- ²¹⁵ Lowman, 'The Rancher, The Printer and the Tycoon,' p. 122.
- ²¹⁶ J. Evetts Haley, *Men of Fiber* (El Paso: Carl Hertzog, 1963), p. 5.
- ²¹⁷ Natural Gasoline Association address, 20 November 1951.
- ²¹⁸ J. Evetts Haley, 'Erle P. Halliburton: Genius with Cement.' *The Cementer* (1959), p. 5.
- ²¹⁹ Emma Jean Walker, UT PhD Diss., 1960.
- ²²⁰ Bradford, 'The Care and Keeping of Memory,' p. 70.
- ²²¹ J. Evetts Haley, *Robbing Banks Was My Business: The Story of J. Harvey Bailey, America's Most Successful Bank Robber* (Canyon, Palo Duro Press, 1973), p. xvi.
- ²²² Ibid. p. 196.
- ²²³ J. Evetts Haley to G. B. Dealey, 9 August 1935, HML.
- ²²⁴ Bill Modisett, Haley's biographer, described Haley's fellow regents as 'the "cream of the crop" of

anti-New Deal, pro-Americanism people in Texas during that era. All were staunch conservatives who espoused pro-freedom, anti-socialist principles.' Modisett, *J. Evetts Haley: A True Texas Legend*, p.141.

²²⁵ Lee O'Daniel to J. Evetts Haley, 21 March 1941, HML.

²²⁶ Lee O'Daniel to J. Evetts Haley, 11 February 1942, HML.

²²⁷ J. Evetts Haley to Allan Shivers, 17 February 1950, HML.

²²⁸ J. Evetts Haley to Houston Harte, 22 October 1963, HML.

²²⁹ It was not until the 1980s and his association with Ronald Reagan that Haley regained some of his earlier influence. See Chandler Davidson, *Race and Class in Texas Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 209.

²³⁰ Thomas Jefferson Anderson was president and publisher of the magazine, *Farm and Ranch*. He was also an active council member of the rightist John Birch Society and spoke publicly in that capacity on many occasions. On 27 October 1966, Anderson and Haley were both speakers at a meeting of the John Birch Society at Fort Smith, Arkansas. Haley and Anderson corresponded regularly. One series of letters considered the possibility of both men waging a political campaign on behalf of J. Edgar Hoover. Thomas Jefferson Anderson to J. Evetts Haley, 2 May 1960, HML.

Dan Smoot was friend and colleague of Haley and a backer of his *Texans for America* organization. Smoot inherited a million dollars from Texas dog and cat food millionaire, Bedford Lewis, and ploughed the money into various right-wing campaigns. His radio show, *The Dan Smoot Broadcast*, had nationwide coverage and he also published rightist propaganda in his *Dan Smoot Report*, described on the masthead as 'a weekly conservative publication'. A flavour of his relationship with Haley can be gauged in the following extract of a letter sent by Smoot to Haley on the U. N., dated 15 October 1958, which read: 'The brainwashing assault has reached the proportions of saturation bombing. They miss no tricks. By they, I mean the whole mongrel horde that lusts to see the corpse of our once-free American republic.' HML.

General Edwin Walker was involved in controversy in 1961 when he resigned from the army in protest at being accused by the Kennedy administration of indoctrinating his troops with literature from the John Birch society. He subsequently ran for governor of Texas in 1962 and received the backing of Haley. He was arrested in 1962 after he protested at the enrollment of black student James Meredith at the University of Mississippi and was charged with seditious conspiracy, insurrection and rebellion. Haley was a supporter of the fund to clear Walker's name and the two men regularly corresponded. The tone and closeness of their relationship is evident in a letter from Haley to Walker dated 28 June 1962. Haley wrote: 'Dear Ted, It was good to talk to you over the phone and to know that you were still after the traitors,' HML. Haley's correspondence contained a letter dated 7 April 1962 from George Lincoln Rockwell, Commander, American Nazi Party, to Walker, pledging A.N.P. support for Walker's Defense Fund, HML.

²³¹ Haley, *A Texan Looks at Lyndon* (Canyon: Palo Duro Press, 1964), p. 209.

²³² Ibid, p. 254.

²³³ Ibid, p. 7.

²³⁴ Ibid, p.185.

²³⁵ Chandler A. Robinson, ed., *J. Evetts Haley: And the Passing of the Old West* (Austin: Jenkins Publishing, 1978), p. 118.

²³⁶ Savoie Lottinville to J. Evetts Haley, 10 August 1951, HML.

²³⁷ Savoie Lottinville to J. Evetts Haley, 11 January 1954, HML.

²³⁸ In 1959, Haley received the sum of approximately \$700 from Williams for a pilot film on Jeff

Milton to be made by Sam Gallu. University of Oklahoma Press to J. Evetts Haley, 13 November 1959, HML.

²³⁹ Tom Anderson to J. Evetts Haley, 17 April 1964, HML.

2. Real People and Poor Boys

He says to me: 'Boy, I just wish you had got this bank here 'fore it went busted and took my wad. I'd rather for a poor boy like you to have it than them goddamned bankers. Both of them bankers are out of prison now and still living swell on what they stole from me and about four or five hundred more folks here.'

"I'll be doggoned. He was Real People."

Edward Anderson, *Thieves Like Us* (1937).

The purpose of this chapter is to identify those sections of white Texas male society whose popular image initially ran parallel with the strong, self-assertive male culture of the rancher, the cowboy or the lawman, but came to be marginalised in the charge – led by Webb, Dobie and Haley – toward the creation of a dominant white Texas masculine icon that would be appropriated to fit in with the self-perception of the burgeoning Texas ruling elite.¹

The approach here will be to assess how a section of this social grouping was characterised in the state's press and then compare this representation with that of the same group in literature of the time. From this comparison, a greater understanding will emerge over the overtly politicised influences that determined how disparate images of white Texas men without power were constructed. The period under discussion will mainly be the 1930s when a number of factors, including most obviously the socio-economic crisis, created an environment in which social dissent was not only common in Texas but, in some sections of the community, perceived as justifiable.

The focus will fall on the works of two writers, Edward Anderson and Nelson Algren, whose characterisations of white Texas manhood centred on those men for whom power as a means of socio-economic advancement or societal acceptance was out of reach and, therefore, irrelevant. The particular brand of constructed white Texas maleness dealt with in this chapter will be literary characterisations of those who spurned or were rejected by the accepted social order and turned to crime. These characters were partly based on the real-life petty thieves, bank robbers and 'desperadoes' who infested Texas and the Southwest in the 1920s and 1930s. These law-breakers, however petty or ineffective, represented a challenge to the social order. Their crimes of robbery and violence were targeted primarily at institutions and the personnel at the heart of the system and their declared sympathies were with those in Texas who were socio-economically deprived. The literature also focussed on the hordes of dispossessed hoboes and migrant workers who travelled from and through Texas in this period and inevitably ran foul of the law. Included in the former group were men such as Raymond and Floyd Hamilton, Marshall Ratchiff, and Buck and Clyde Barrow. These were all Texas poor boys whose actions and behaviour evoked within the state a variety of contradictory images and opinions. Assessment of these examples of white Texas maleness was largely determined by the political sympathies of the commentator.

This world, of the petty but potentially murderous Texas robber, was almost exclusively a male-dominated environment. The presence of Bonnie Parker, who along with her lover Clyde Barrow dominated the public perception of the Texas desperado in the early 1930s, among this class of law-breaker tends to indicate, especially to the latter-day observer influenced by cinematic versions of their story, a strong female presence. In the 1930s, however, the focus of the lawmen of Texas and

of the Texas press was on Barrow. Parker was perceived as no more than an interesting and newsworthy adjunct to the exploits of a dangerous criminal. Her presence added an extra dimension to the story and garnered a degree of sympathy from the general public, but in the contemporary press it was the character and motivation of Barrow that dominated.

Folk Heroes or Mad Dogs?

Some of these law-breakers such as Barrow were regarded as folk heroes around whom romanticised legends had been constructed. They were somehow seen as individuals who challenged the rule of the banks and their allies in the law and whose exploits offered satisfaction and excitement to millions of the Texas poor at a time when the livelihoods of many Texans were being threatened by the failures of the dominant economic system. In their stories covering this aspect of white Texas masculinity, Anderson and Algren were broadly sympathetic to the plight of the poor in Texas. Both writers saw the villains of the piece as those who controlled and profited in a society in which, they believed, there was an unequal balance that led inevitably to injustice.

For some, this type of law-breaker achieved the status identified by Eric Hobsbawm of 'social bandits': those who are forced to break the law to avenge a wrong or to defend their honour, family, or community from some oppressive power or circumstance.² In Hobsbawm's view, the oppressive power was corporate capitalism and it was the idea that the small-time thief was being thought of as a challenge to the corporate elite that made them so dangerous in the eyes of those who controlled Texas. Hobsbawm states that this:

was perhaps one powerful reason why these rather minor and marginal figures on the scene of American crime were singled out as ‘public enemies’. Unlike ‘the mob’, they represented a challenge to the all-American values of free enterprise, though they believed in it.³

Hobsbawm saw these killers and robbers as ‘historical throwbacks’ whose time had effectively passed, making their status as ‘social bandits’ tenuous.⁴ However, he had little doubt that the legacy of the past had an important part to play in the development of the Texas desperado. In the 2000 postscript to his work *Bandits*, he quotes L. Glenn Seretan as observing:

The premier outlaws of the 1930s were well aware that they belonged to a tradition: they were weaned on it and influenced by it; they paid obeisance to it in word and deed; and the trajectory of their brief spectacular careers was ultimately defined by it.⁵

Both Hobsbawm and Seretan, therefore, point to the influential mythologies of Texas history as being a major factor in driving the careers of these predominantly white Texas male bandits.

This position was also favoured by Nelson Algren. Algren’s fascination with what he saw as the bogus image of the white Texas male is best illustrated in his later piece, *After the Buffalo: Bonnie and Clyde*, written in the late 1960s but heavily influenced by his experience in Texas in the 1930s. The media construction of the persona of Clyde Barrow (Algren calls it, ‘the myth of monstrosity’) stemmed, he believed,

from within the history of the Southern poor and the need of the Texas power elite to eliminate all such negative dissent. Algren asked: 'Who *were* Bonnie and Clyde?' He responded to his own question with the following answer: 'They were outcasts of the cotton frontier. They were children of the wilderness whose wilderness had been razed, who came to maturity in the hardest of times.'

Barrow's status as an anachronism, according to Algren, allowed him to be demonised, tarred with the brush of homosexuality and perversion or whatever it took to distance him from the people and from martyr status. Algren's opinion of the societal status of Bonnie and Clyde was in line with his Marxist opinions. He wrote:

Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow were not gunned down simply because they were outlaws. They were killed because their outlawry was so profitless. There are no payoffs, no kickbacks, no graft, and no fees involved in the rawjaw robbery. Had they the enterprise - as others had - to arrange fake bank robberies for a percentage of the take, they might have become respectable and prosperous members of a business community. But their methods belonged to a time that had passed. They were bow-and-arrow people in the age of the fountain pen.⁶

The 1940 *WPA Guide to Texas* offered its own perspective on their status:

With typical hospitality, Texas accords the same place in its folk tradition to violators of the law that it does to those who uphold authority. The people have never condoned law-breaking as such, but they respect bravery in any individual. Even such recent outlaws as Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker are

represented by two distinct ballads. Generally all such desperadoes are portrayed in folk legends as modern Robin Hoods who took from the rich and gave to the poor.⁷

Clyde Barrow and his female cohort Bonnie Parker were treated in this manner in Arthur Penn's cinematic adaptation of their lives, *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967). The couple are offered in this film as classic folk heroes: enemies of the system and friends of the poor and dispossessed. One of the film's scriptwriters was Robert Benton, a native-born Texan, who wrote of the relevance of the couple in his childhood of the late 1930s and early 1940s: 'Everyone knew someone who had met them or seen them, and kids used to go to Halloween parties dressed up as Bonnie and Clyde . . . they were great, great folk heroes.'⁸ Arthur Penn claimed that one of his aims in making the film was to try accurately to place in context the social reality, as he saw it, of the Depression-era rural criminal. He makes the point that characters like Clyde Barrow, while certainly a public nuisance, were not really worthy of the 'Public Enemy' status conferred on them by the financial interests and by J. Edward Hoover's F.B.I. He attempted to develop a thematic tone that offered, if not sympathy, then, at least, a degree of understanding. He wrote:

Naive and living on poor emotional rations was the way I described the characters. . . . As a kid in the Great Depression, I had developed a certain sympathy for the people I saw resisting the circumstances that prevailed in the country . . . There was to my youthful perception a sense of what we observed of our American life was *unfair*.⁹

Although made in the 1960s, therefore, much of the sentiment contained within *Bonnie and Clyde* had its source in the youthful and childhood memories of its creators.¹⁰

It was not only cinema that endeavoured to place these law-breakers in a more favourable light. The conclusion of the Woody Guthrie song, *The Ballad of Pretty Boy Floyd*, written in March 1939, summed up the attitude of those who believed that the crimes of characters such as Barrow were being used to deflect attention from the grander crimes being perpetrated legally by corporate America. The song concludes with the following lines:

Now as through this world I ramble I see lots of funny men,
Some will rob you with a six-gun, some with a fountain pen.
But as through your life you travel, and as through your life you roam,
You will never see an outlaw drive a family from their home.¹¹

Guthrie's song attempted to place the severity of the actions of men like Floyd into a broader societal context. He believed that the behaviour of this tiny scattering of over-hyped and opportunist criminals was justified given the real and socially corrosive damage being done to working people by those within the system who were working it solely for profit. Guthrie also wrote supportive songs about the Dalton gang and the female outlaw Belle Starr while, at the same time, writing scathing attacks on the character of those who operated within the system, the best example being his dance song, *The Jolly Banker*.

This respectful attitude toward some sections of the criminal class was not uncommon among Texas writers. The Texas author and noted folklorist William A.

Owens, in his autobiographical novel *This Stubborn Soil* (1966), wrote of the status enjoyed by post-Civil War outlaws Frank and Jesse James among his family of poor East Texas farmers. For many in the South, the James brothers were not simply common criminals but instead represented continued resistance against the North and, especially, against that region's economic interests. Owens wrote of the attitude of his grandmother to these men:

Times were hard during the war. They were harder in the years after the war. Schools were closed. Children worked in the fields and woods or were left to run wild along the Ouachita. These were the years of the James boys . . . For the rest of her life she was bitter about the war. She thought the South needed more men like the James boys. When her son named his sons Jesse and Frank it seemed as right to her as it had to him.¹²

Owens' attachment to the idea of those involved in certain law-breaking activity as folk heroes was not confined to distant historic figures with significance that reeked of Southern patriotism. He also judged the claims made on behalf of Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker to be considered folk heroes as justified. In 1950, he wrote of the crazed public reaction to the death of the pair and declared: 'Many of those present wept over the deaths of the bandits and condemned the police for killing them.' He also stated that the ballad penned by Bonnie Parker entitled *It's Death to Bonnie and Clyde* had 'many elements that appeal to folk imagination.'¹³

The ballad told the story of the pair from the perspective of Parker. The essence of it centred on the role of the law and of the press in constructing their notoriety, which,

according to the song, was unjustified. Parker also identified those in Texas society with whom they had an affinity. She wrote of the role of the law:

If a policeman is killed in Dallas
 And they have no clue or guide
 If they can't find a fiend, just wipe the slate clean
 And hang it on Bonnie and Clyde.

And of the responsibility of the press in their infamy:

A newsboy once said to his buddy
 'I wish old Clyde would get jumped
 In these hard times we'd get a few dimes
 If five or six cops would get bumped.'

The story told also of their kinship with the poor of West Dallas where they both grew up:

From Irving to West Dallas viaduct
 Is known as the Great Divide
 Where the women are kin, and the men are men
 And they won't stool on Bonnie and Clyde.¹⁴

Parker, therefore, saw her and Barrow being controlled by the machinations of two key sections of the Texas Establishment: the media and in the forces of law and order.

Whether the people of Texas, or even sections of that society, took these individuals to their hearts or whether they were seen primarily as a source of escapist entertainment albeit with a vague social context, is open to question.

Instances of gross brutality by Texas communities against those in the black community are legion. The same treatment, however, was sometimes accorded white criminals. Marshall Ratcliff, one of the tragic-comic Santa Claus bank robbers, was taken by a lynch mob in Cisco, Texas in 1929 and stripped naked, brutally beaten and hung.¹⁵ When the first rope failed to take his weight, the broken Ratcliff was left lying unconscious in the street before another rope was found and used. All of this occurred before a crowd of hundreds of men, women and children. It is difficult to believe that there was a place in the hearts of those particular Texans that would transport the daring Ratcliff into the annals of Texas folk legend. Ratcliff was not brutalised because he was a bank robber. The crime that sparked such outrage against him was murder. He was callously killed by this typical Texas community because he had coldly shot a much-loved local law officer. Under these immediate and personalised circumstances, his socio-economic resentment against the system did not engender any degree of empathy among his fellow Texans. There was, therefore, a line that Texas law-breakers could not safely cross, irrespective of their own perception of their affinity with the common folk or vice versa. That line was roughly drawn, but certainly meant exclusion from folk hero status for those who perpetrated violence against those who were seen as serving the community.

The Texas Press and the Desperadoes

Parker and Barrow, and the small collection of law-breakers who shared the need to rob and kill, had, through extensive and sensationalised newspaper coverage, given the people of Texas continuous entertainment in the two years prior their deaths on 23 May 1934. As Parker's ballad indicates, as well as the fact that she regularly sent items like this to newspapers in an attempt to express their own perspective on their exploits, the two understood the power the press had in creating an image that suited its own ends.

Most newspapers were concerned editorially with upholding the stature of the law and aimed to construct an image of the criminal that would demean his status in the eyes of the public. The Texas Establishment, as represented by the forces of law and order, the politicians and the press, officially perceived such men as being a cancer on the face of civilised society which must be eliminated by any means necessary. However, the first and prime objective of the Texas press was to sell newspapers. They did this to a considerable degree by developing the stories of these individuals into exciting adventures. In the process their stated objective was to demonise those who challenged the existing order. They hoped, at least editorially, that the outlaws would be seen by those people in Texas tempted to perceive them as benevolent Robin Hoods or 'social bandits' instead as self-serving and violent homicidal criminals. However, rather than having a negative impact on the image of the criminals, sensationalised contemporary press coverage nurtured their image and helped to elevate their status among great swathes of the state's population.

Therefore, by examining the phenomenon of these law-breakers as reported in the Texas press and by gauging the attitude of this branch of the Texas power elite as it related to such examples of white Texas maleness, the perspective and motivation of writers who chose to focus on this particular manifestation of white Texas manhood

can, by comparison, be placed in a clearer societal and political context. The views that stemmed from the Texas press were not uniform. As already stated, editorial opinion in these newspapers was overwhelmingly and consistently antagonistic to the law-breaker. However, within the pages of the newspapers there were indications that there existed in Texas society in 1934 a variety of opinions regarding such criminals. The indicators came in the form of letters to the editor or in non-editorial articles. Such sources would suggest that the one-dimensional negative rhetoric of the press did not represent the full picture and that the belief that some in this society did have sympathy for the position of the desperado had a foundation.

The concentration here will be on the period that saw the criminal phenomenon reach its peak in Texas with the killing of Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker in Louisiana on 23 May 1934. Examination of the Texas press in the weeks running up to this event, and in its aftermath, makes it possible to determine the attitude of the state's newspapers toward a breed of white Texas maleness that did not conform to the norms set out by those who controlled Texas society.

In early May 1934, the *Houston Post* published a letter from a 'citizen' of Lufkin, Texas, the essence of which read:

Why not muzzle the newspapers? . . . The newspapers are overly anxious to sell, and in order to do so you publish a lot of sensational yellow news. Why not co-operate with the law for a while and see how soon these bad boys are brought to justice.¹⁶

The letter was a direct response to an editorial entitled 'Muzzle on Machine Guns,' which had suggested legislation to curtail the use of such weapons in Texas. These

guns, the editorial stated, were the power behind ‘a few desperadoes like John Dillinger and Clyde Barrow.’¹⁷ The view of ‘citizen’ (the anonymous writer of the letter) was that the newspapers were also guilty of playing a key role in the creation of this class of criminal by offering them the oxygen of sensationalised publicity.

Other correspondents advanced the view that the political power structure in Texas society should shoulder some of the blame for the phenomenon. A letter from an ‘ex-convict’ of Harrisburg, Texas, referred pointedly to the corruption within the prison system and touched on the fact that money could buy you privilege or even release from prison though not everybody was in a position to buy themselves out or to make the burden of a prison sentence easier. ‘Ex-convict’ wrote:

Every prisoner knows that if he has a little money that he can obtain clemency.

I’m not saying this as an insinuation against any of the prison official or the governor. One senator offered to get several of the boys a parole for \$200.

The writer of this letter, who claimed that he had been in Eastham Prison Farm with Clyde Barrow, went on to make a claim on behalf of ‘the majority’ of the state’s prison population:

Some inmates of the Texas prison system are just as worthy of a place in society as they [the general public] are, because they are not criminals at heart.

They are boys who have been deprived of some of the pleasures and luxuries of life . . . The majority of criminals are ‘made’ not born.¹⁸

The clear message here is that there was, in the opinion of the correspondent, corruption at the heart of the political process in Texas and also that socio-economic factors played a major role in the construction of a criminal class in the state. A simpler view in the same vein came in a letter to the *Dallas Morning News* from R. L. Young of Abilene, Texas, who wrote: 'I would like to remind these gentlemen [politicians] that desperadoes never wrecked a state. When the state is wrecked it will be the governor and legislators who do it.'¹⁹ A Captain Argyle of Houston, Texas, wrote to his local newspaper complaining about the 'terrible inefficiency and failure of our law-officers.' Argyle suggested that reports that the police were 'taking up a collection to be used for the lucky cop who captured Barrow' was evidence of corruption and that this kind of task should be accepted without further financial incentive as this 'is one of the jobs they contracted for when they became policemen.'²⁰

There was, therefore, in correspondence to the Texas press at this time, a degree of debate surrounding culpability for what was generally perceived to be a serious social problem. Few editors or journalists expressed any doubt as to the social corrosiveness of this kind of criminality or the men who were engaged in it. However, journalistic expressions of concern over the methods of the law and their political masters were harder to find. In the regular *Houston Post* column 'Passing Scene,' in the days following the killing of Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker, the tone, while unambiguously antagonistic toward the criminal, was also unmistakably sceptical with regard to the motives and methods of the law. The article began with an acknowledgement of the role of the press in the creation of such people:

It has not been our intention to join the general chorus of gabbling and fanfare

caused by the erasure of Clyde and Bonnie from this mortal scene. There has been far too much written about them already, before and after death, and it undoubtedly contributed to and encouraged the arrogant heroics and melodramatic careers they rode to their inevitable fatal end.²¹

The focus then shifted to the columnist's straightforward condemnation of the couple: 'They were a vicious pair, venomously anti-social, nursing a cold hatred against law and order . . . they had to be killed.'²² All of this was predictable and generally supportive of society's obvious need to be free of such behaviour. The journalist even went out of his way to dismiss the notion that Parker and Barrow be given heroic status: 'we cannot grow misty-eyed and romantic about Clyde and Bonnie, as many do, thinking of them as Robin Hoods with a certain glamour.'²³

However, the attitude toward those who had engaged in the killing was less predictable. The columnist continued:

Yet . . . neither can we sit at the feet, in rapt awe and admiration, of the men who so effectively erased them. Somehow, there is a shadow of taint in the manner in which Clyde and his moll were 'let have it.' From this distance it seems not too sporting. And the issue of whether they were deliberately ambushed . . . already is sharply controversial . . . From all accounts it appears there are some contradictory circumstances . . .²⁴

This commentary was unusual because it did not take the opportunity to eulogise one area of white Texas manhood at the expense of another. It was common among the state's press to demonise the criminal while at the same time comparing their lack of

courage and morality with those men who engaged in hunting them down. That this was not the case in this instance, especially when the source comes from a newspaper close to the heart of the Texas power elite, suggests that beneath the surface of Texas society opinion on the manner of the men the state was producing was not unanimous.

In the early summer of 1934, therefore, the Texas press was intensely interested in the exploits of these small-time criminals who roamed the country in automobiles holding up small, isolated banks and rural stores and, it was reported, were prepared to kill anyone, including law officers and innocent bystanders, who challenged them. The Texas press, primarily because of its need to sell newspapers, sensationally reported the exploits of these criminals. As a result, this class of law-breaker attained a lurid and thrilling persona which, in turn, gave them a large degree of fame and popularity. The thrust of press reporting toward this variety of white Texas masculinity, while overwhelmingly negative, did, as 'citizen' suggested, talk of these men in terms that sensationalised the personalities involved. It consequently created a mood of lurid excitement mixed with fear and paranoia among the general public.

An example of the latter was a front-page headline in *The Daily Texan*, the student newspaper of the University of Texas at Austin, which read 'Barrow Near-Customer of Student Soda Clerk.' The story centred on the experience of Joe Motheral, a student working at a sandwich and soft-drink shop in Austin who was suspicious of a car that stopped at his place of work and did not give the customary 'hoot' to attract his attention. Motheral, it was reported, then looked into the 'new dark red Ford sedan, with yellow spoked wheels' and saw 'a woman smoking a cigar . . . sitting next to the driver.'²⁵ The image that Motheral 'thought' he witnessed, of a cigar-smoking Parker in a garish car, was one direct from the pages of the Texas press. This example is both an indication of the power of the popular press to establish in the

minds of the public such images and an indication of the willingness of newspapers to feature such flimsy stories. Both factors demonstrate the hold that characters such as these had on Texas culture in the 1930s.

For example, the *San Antonio Express* wrote on its front page of ‘murderous banditry, burglary, criminal assault, saloon killings, the blood feuds of the whisky-selling racket’ and promised ‘no compromise with the lawless situation.’²⁶ Three days later, when describing the selection of a jury for the bank robber, Raymond Hamilton, they described the criminal in terms that would not have been out of place in a cheap crime novel, including a physical description of him as a ‘young blonde desperado’.²⁷ The *Houston Post*, in common with all Texas newspapers, similarly engaged in sensationalised language when discussing Hamilton as ‘Texas’ No. 2 bad man . . . the boy consort of Clyde Barrow.’²⁸ On a single page of the *Austin American*, Barrow was described variously as a ‘law-mocking desperado,’ a ‘southwest terrorist’ and a ‘wild-eyed desperado.’²⁹

This is not to say that the press was not aware of arguments surrounding the sociological reasons for such behaviour. On occasion, these were considered but were inevitably rejected in the strongest possible terms. The most common line of argument surrounding the reasons for the problem was that the perpetrators were social aberrations who had, unfortunately and for no reason that the correspondents could fathom, decided to ply their trade in Texas.

There was a deluge of letters from the public along these lines, urging the politicians, the law and the ordinary citizens of the state to react to the challenge posed by the criminal. Numerous letters complained about the slowness of the judicial process and the worth of jurors in cases involving desperadoes and as many called for the use of the death penalty. The perceived threat to public order was

typically expressed by I. H. Terry, of Stamford, Texas, in a letter to the *Dallas Morning News*. Terry wrote: 'This country today is in the power of an organised bunch of criminals who have no regard for human rights, human life or the laws of man or God.'³⁰

What this crisis in the public's confidence incited more than anything else in the press was an evocation of the sterling values commonly associated with white Texas maleness. B. C. Bourland of Itasca, Texas, was typical in his appeal to the masculinity of Texas. He wrote: 'I want to appeal to you red-blooded . . . Texans to think seriously and be the same kind of men our forefathers were.'³¹ The spectre of the state's past and, especially, the idea in Texas that nineteenth-century Texas maleness had left a legacy that was worth upholding, was common currency in the 1930s. This was, of course, at the core of the work of those, such as Haley, Dobie and Webb, who constructed white Texas maleness around this legacy. Texas Rangers, contemporary examples of white Texas masculinity, were cited by a number of correspondents as the answer to the problem. Evans Smith of Kemp, Texas, wrote:

Give Texas more Rangers of the calibre of Lone Wolf Gonzales and the crime wave that we are going through will not be of long duration. Arm these men with the criminals' own weapon, the machine-gun, and give them orders to get their prisoner, dead or alive.³²

Those Texas lawmen who eventually killed Barrow and Parker (Frank Hamer, Manny Gault, Ted Hinton and Bob Alcorn) were lionised in the Texas press.³³ The opinions of the wives of Hamer and Gault were sought by the *Austin Statesman*, which reported Hamer's wife as saying that he was 'the bravest man who ever lived.'³⁴ The

newspaper itself was hardly less complimentary. It promoted the idea of a celebration to mark the achievement of the 'silent' Hamer and the 'modest' Gault which would be known as the 'Hamer-Gault Hero Day'. The justification for this was voiced by Sheriff Lee O. Allen of Austin who insisted that, 'by golly, law enforcement work and bravery like Frank and Manny displayed deserves all the recognition in the world.'³⁵ All of the major big city Texas dailies responded to the character of these lawmen in the same manner. The following extract from an editorial in the *Galveston Daily News* was typical:

Hamer is . . . a man-hunter of the old school . . . the type of officer whom outlaws learn to fear. When he made his reputation with the Rangers that force was noted for getting its man . . . The Ranger force can still be a powerful ally of law and order if it is kept up to its traditional standard . . .³⁶

In the *San Antonio Express*, Hamer was described as 'a fearless man-hunter', while the *Dallas Morning News* described the demise of Barrow and Parker as 'a sensational encounter with an old-time Texas Ranger.'³⁷ A front page article in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* purported to give Hamer's view of the brutal killing of a female. It read:

I hated to shoot a woman . . . but as I looked down my rifle barrel I remembered the way in which Bonnie Parker had taken part in the murder of nine peace officers. Bonnie just got in the way of some bullets intended for Clyde.³⁸

This extract, while also containing a slight degree of initial concern for the gender status of Parker, served to confirm the single-minded loyalty and determination to act that the press believed lay at the heart of Hamer's character.

Much of this praise had an overt political purpose. The governor of Texas, Miriam A. ('Ma') Ferguson, had in 1933 dismissed all of the Texas Rangers, Hamer included, in a gesture of political revenge largely because the force had ostentatiously supported her opponent, Ross Sterling, in the Democratic primary. Open displays of support for ex-Rangers when performing the tasks that many believed should have been performed by the now-disbanded force were, therefore, an open criticism of Ferguson as much as they were an endorsement of the actions concerned. Maury Hughes, a candidate for governor of Texas, while hailing the death of Barrow, used the event to bemoan the status of the Ranger service which, he stated was 'bogged down in politics.'³⁹ The elevation of the character of Hamer and his colleagues in the Texas press, therefore, had a definite political character.

Hamer's reputation was that of a man who shunned publicity. However, a few days following the shooting of Barrow and Parker, he made a public appearance at a film premiere in Austin. Ironically, the film was *Viva Villa*, which told the story of the Mexican bandit Pancho Villa, played by Wallace Beery. Hamer willingly had his picture taken with Celia Villa, the daughter of the late bandit. Hamer and Villa had been adversaries along the Mexican border a generation earlier and Hamer admitted to knowing the bandit 'real well' and described him as 'one of his good friends.' Villa, like Parker and Barrow, had been ambushed and killed in his car and photographs of his corpse were widely circulated among a morbidly curious public. This had happened only eleven years before the death of the Texas couple. Therefore, with the similarities in the deaths fresh in the minds of all in Texas, it was necessary for Celia

Villa to explain the rationale that drove her father. She was reported as describing her father as 'a great man who robbed the rich only because he wanted to help the poor.'

At a time when the character of bandits was being unanimously demonised in the Texas press, it was interesting that Villa, described by the newspaper as 'probably the world's greatest bandit,' was being celebrated by such as Hamer who, only a few days previously, had ambushed and killed contemporary bandits Parker and Barrow.⁴⁰

With time, of course, Bonnie and Clyde achieved the same sort of popular status Villa was enjoying in 1934.

No shadow was cast by the Texas press over the character of Hamer and his colleagues. The circumstances surrounding the death of Barrow and Parker, as hinted at in the 'Passing Scene' column in the *Houston Post*, were clouded in contradictions which, if the press had chosen to highlight them, had the potential for major controversy. All newspaper reports of the event depended exclusively on the word of the lawmen involved and subsequent telling of the tale in books has followed the same route. Walter Prescott Webb's telling of the tale in *The Texas Rangers*, for instance, was solely dependent on Hamer's version.

Barrow was portrayed in the Texas press as the antithesis of Hamer. His demise was celebrated in unambiguous terms and it was his character, as opposed to that of his female companion that dominated the stories. The *Austin Statesman* expressed the common opinion of Parker when it brutally commented: 'His girl is merely incidental trash.'⁴¹ Front page banner headlines in the *Dallas Morning News* exclaiming 'Posse Kills Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker' were accompanied a series of reports the tone of which can be summed up by the following:

By their ignominious deaths, shorn of the glamour that small minds saw in the

sneaking and bloody exploits of their brief careers . . . the two were all but chopped to pieces by gunfire . . . their bodies badly mangled by the spray of bullets.⁴²

This accent on the brutal and dismissive was designed to reinforce the justification for the killing and to emphasise the price that would be paid by those who flouted the law. Graphic pictures of the dead couple were displayed in the majority of the state's newspapers. This, while also appealing to the morbidly ghoulish, thousands of whom filed pass the dead bodies of Parker and Barrow, was intended to dehumanise the outlaws and to lessen their appeal among the people of Texas. Whether the media-induced frenzy had its desired negative effect, or whether it simply added to the folk status of this brand of criminal, is open to question. What it is important in this context to understand is that the Texas press consistently and unreservedly voiced vehement opposition to the desperado.

They achieved this, in part, by considering the cross section of views that they surmised were abroad among the people of Texas. A front-page editorial in the *Austin Statesman* included the following:

Romance has no place in murder. Opinion will be divided today into three groups as people think of the death of Clyde Barrow and his girl. One light and sentimental type will express sympathy for the immediate dead – Barrow and the girl. They will not express sympathy for those Barrow killed. It is said that a very large part of America of the last fifteen years has been infected and mentally diseased by gang and crime pictures in movies and printed in newspapers. And so there will be those that sympathise with a dramatic killer. .

. Another group will merely talk about how Barrow and Parker were killed . . . to the people of this neutral class the crimes of Barrow . . . constitute merely a series of news thrills. That also is bad. There are still in America some real people of maturity who are patriotically American and are quite ashamed that 120 million people have proven so weak that they do not handle correctly such problems as Barrow brings up . . . Today this group will be increased by the natural band-wagon type of mind which votes for success and votes against failure. America succeeded today in getting Barrow.⁴³

There is a large degree of hypocrisy in this piece, especially regarding the influence of the press. A few days after the killing, the *Statesman* ran a feature advertising the 'Clyde-Bonnie Newsreel' which, they promised, would feature 'views of the bodies.'⁴⁴ This was surely the kind of crass exposure that would encourage the very things that the newspaper was warning against. That said, the main point of this editorial was to dismiss the views of those in Texas who may have been tempted to probe deeper into the motivation of the outlaw.

Other papers were also keen to dismiss any hint of sentimentality or sympathy for the pair. The *Houston Post* warned: 'there should be no shedding of maudlin tears. Their sins were many so the law set out to kill them as one would a rattlesnake.'⁴⁵ An editorial in the *Austin American* added to the condemnation of Barrow when it commented:

Congratulations to these fearless officers of the law who trailed these enemies of the social order. Clyde Barrow was one of the most desperate of criminals . . . He has robbed with impunity and slain without mercy . . . For two years he has

been the terror of Texas . . . There is a road called straight. It pays . . .⁴⁶

The *San Antonio Express* rounded on the preacher who buried Barrow. His crime was to voice Christian forgiveness in the following manner: 'I have not had the privilege of knowing this young Barrow, but I love him.' Of this, the newspaper commented:

Consider these ministerial words . . . We are fearfully and wonderfully made . . . to the weeping mothers and wailing wives and children they were horribly well known. In turn, however, those victims and the old folks and young from whom they were torn by Hero Clyde in the long quest of loot and blood, were known to far fewer persons than the criminal. The 'sympathy' which is bestirred by reading an account of the outlaw's burial may be symbolised by an icicle.⁴⁷

There was, therefore, little or no compassion for, or empathy with, the plight of a criminal such as Barrow in the state's press. Neither was there consideration given to the possibility that social factors may have played a part in making him a bandit. Nowhere in the coverage of his death or in the subsequent recounting of his criminal career did the Texas press acknowledge the negative impact of a childhood in the West Dallas slums of the 1920s. As Nelson Algren subsequently wrote: 'I have never seen a newspaper, magazine, or book about these two that took into account their beginnings and the climate of their times.'⁴⁸ Equally, the press had no truck with the notion that the chief target of these law-breakers, the banks, had contributed to their own misfortune through unforgiving and callous financial practices that had impacted greatly on the lives of the Texas poor. Sympathy in this instance was exclusively

reserved for those dozen lawmen and citizens who had, allegedly, been shot by Barrow and Parker. The position of the state's newspapers with regard to white Texas manhood in this context was one of intense loyalty to those it believed to be upholders of the established social order, dismissive of those who threatened it, and contemptuous of those who sought answers within the inequalities of the state's socio-economic system.

The prominence of outlaws such as Clyde Barrow threatened the necessary assumptions of those who believed in the supremacy of white men in Texas. Therefore, when the *Dallas Morning News* asked: 'to what throwback in humanity or flaw in civilisation the world owes its Barrows . . . can only be conjectured,'⁴⁹ they were seeking to distance this manner of white Texas maleness from that of the class of powerful whiteness whom they represented. Also, when the *Austin Statesman* attempted to demystify Barrow and remove from his character any hint of authority or respect by describing him as the 'one-time West Dallas chicken thief,'⁵⁰ they were attempting to place his manner of white Texas maleness into an image that they could more easily identify and then comfortably dismiss. The display of gruesome pictures of the dead couple on many of the front pages of the Texas newspapers was also designed to strip these renegades of any semblance of human dignity. Barrow was shown bullet-ridden with eyes semi-closed and naked from the waist up, his head lying in a massive blood stain where the back of his head and shoulder had been blasted with a shotgun. Parker was in the same state of undress with an obvious bullet wound to the mouth which had shattered her teeth and ripped apart her top lip. The indignity of the scene was increased by the presence surrounding the bodies of what appeared to be casual onlookers.

Barrow was an affront to those in Texas who promoted the supremacy of the white race. The obvious flaws in his character served to confirm the views of members of the Texas Eugenics movement, such as E. E. Davis, who believed that only the best of white Texas society had the necessary self-control, strength and morality to assume control of the state. Barrow, therefore, needed to be eliminated by the Texas power structure. This was the case for a number of reasons. There is no doubt that his predilection for violence made him, and those like him, a social menace that could not be reasonably tolerated in any society. However, he was also a physical reminder to those who were constructing the state in their own supreme white image, that there were among them poor and resentful citizens whose simple aspirations were not being met by society and were, therefore, willing to challenge the core racial and socio-economic premise of the ruling elite.

Literature

When times became even more difficult for the powerless in Texas during the years of the Great Depression, men who violently broke the rule of law were held up by writers such as Edward Anderson and Nelson Algren as the inevitable consequence of an oppressive socio-economic system that not only legally robbed the Texas poor of the little they had but continued to hammer them into submission. Both writers were profoundly influenced by the story of Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow and saw in this tale a reflection of the socio-economic wrongs and injustice that, they believed, lay at the heart of male-dominated Texas society. This acknowledgement and understanding of the motivation of those involved in crime against economic interests

was little different from the respect accorded by William Owens' grandmother toward the James brothers.

In comparison with the one-dimensional attitudes of the Establishment-owned Texas press toward this manner of Texas criminal, the stories of Anderson and Algren sought to offer characters who were multi-layered. For these writers and their politically-motivated work, which essentially favoured the law-breaker, the battle lines were drawn between society and its rulers and those who were prepared to challenge the rules irrespective of the consequences. Anderson, in particular, was interested in the significance of the hyperbole that surrounded the press coverage of these individuals. As a journalist, he understood the workings and priorities of the press. *Thieves Like Us*, for instance, employs journalistic interludes both to advance the story and at the same time to offer an alternative to the official view of the exploits and behaviour of the main characters.

What set Anderson and Algren apart from the majority of their contemporaries among Texas writers was the fact that their work displayed little or no faith in the system to provide. In their vision, there was a pessimistic strain that required the reader to accept that hope within the existing socio-economic system was futile and that alternatives, however radical, anti-socially corrosive or out of the ordinary, must be contemplated with an open mind. These were writers with defined political agendas who saw among socio-economically deprived white Texas masculinity the ideal vehicle to propagandise their political message.

Sharecropper Fiction

There were, of course, during the inter-war years, a variety of literary constructions of powerless Texas manhood. Other Texas writers, especially those in the literary genre that came to be known as 'Sharecropper Fiction', also set out to record the experience of those Texans who had suffered greatly as American capitalism stuttered from crisis to crisis in the 1920s and 1930s. The majority of Texas writers saw incorporated within the capitalist system a route, normally signposted 'education' or 'hard work', through which the very best of white Texas manhood could escape and then stride manfully toward its rightful place at the American table of opportunity.

Four types of white Texas maleness were most common in Sharecropper Fiction. There were those such as Ben Wilson, the lead character in Dorothy Scarborough's *In the Land of Cotton* (1923), who craved education in order to learn about and organise farmer's unions and co-operatives. Then there were those who were less altruistic, such as John David Huntsman, from Sigmund Byrd's *The Redlander* (1939), who, from humble origins became a lawyer and ultimately a senator.

Sam Tucker, the head of his sharecropper family in George Sessions Perry's *Hold Autumn in Your Hand* (1940), was a man content within his class who relished the challenge to his masculinity that his struggles with nature brought him. Perry shared with Anderson and Algren a lack of faith in the system to provide for the Texas poor and this was translated into his work. Despite this, however, the fictional Sam Tucker asserts his undoubted sense of himself as a man within the confines of his own domestic and natural environment. Tucker's occasional forays into the wider world have only brought him angst and personal confusion. His distrust of the system and those working within it has not nurtured deep resentment, only a hardening of his conviction that he must have no part in it. Tucker, for instance, fears that

subservience would follow acceptance of a wage system and this would pose a threat to his sense of himself as a man.⁵¹

Another example of how white men were characterised in Sharecropper Fiction centred on those who were weak and ignorant. The best example of this type came from Edward Everett Davis's novel *The White Scourge* (1940). Silas Green, for example, is a character with a repulsive wife, nine scrawny, disease-ridden children, a calcified spine and toe itch. The horror of his existence is employed by the author to further his personal white supremacist political perspective. Whereas Scarborough, Byrd, Perry and Cross were broadly sympathetic to the plight of the powerless in Texas and sought to identify social problems as the main contributor to poverty, Davis saw the core problem of the Texas poor as being one of an absence of quality breeding. *The White Scourge* included the following passage:

It doesn't require as much intelligence to raise cotton in Texas as it does to raise corn and feed livestock in Iowa. The most serious rural problem in the South is . . . that of the biologically impoverished tribes of marginal humanity black, white, and Mexican - subsisting on cotton . . . The human creature of weak body and moronic mentality who would perish without reproducing his hideous kind amid the blizzards and the wheat fields of the Dakotas can survive successfully and populate half a schoolroom in the mild cotton regions of Texas.⁵²

Sections of Texas society were quick to attack literary representations of the state that did not show Texas in the best possible light. For example, Scarborough's most controversial work *The Wind* (1925) generated a minor controversy in Texas over its

negative and supposedly inaccurate depiction of frontier living conditions. Much of the criticism centred on the type of white Texas manhood offered in the book. R. C. Crane, president of the West Texas Historical Association, was particularly offended by the choice of expression used by Scarborough to depict the common language of the cowboy. Of the turn of phrase 'I'd leave like a bat shot out of hell' Crane wrote:

No genuine cowboy of the old school ever used any such language in the presence of ladies but would stand ready to pull the nose of anyone else who did. There never was a class of people more courteous or chivalrous towards ladies than the old-time cowboy⁵³

Crane's protective concern for the image of the core icon of historical white Texas manhood was, as already discussed in relation to the work of Webb, Dobie and Haley, common in the Texas of the inter-war years.

The Sharecropper novels of the Depression were for the most part sympathetic to the poor but they did not come from the poor. Much of the politicised impetus behind these novels was a practical one, to generate support for the formation of union organisations and farm co-operatives. Therefore, the kind of male characters portrayed in the propaganda novels of the Depression were blessed with the qualities that would either take them out of their environment or cope, according to their ability, within it. Anderson and Algren stand out in this respect as being different. What they offered is an alternative view of a breed of Texas maleness that was sensationallly hyped and demonised in the inter-war years and which, as a result, became a seminal example of white Texas manhood for a great swathe of the Texan

people, most of whom had been similarly excluded as Texas changed culturally and economically.

This is not to suggest that the characterisation of the white Texas male among these writers did not share some of the core qualities of masculinity that can be found in the work of Webb, Dobie or Haley. Theirs is as much a male-dominated sphere as that inhabited by the iconographic men of Texas fiction. The male characters offered by Anderson and Algren can be as determined, resourceful or open to the use of violence as a means of establishing their influence as stereotypical Texas men. The differences between the powerless and the powerful lies in the relationship that each has with society. In their fictions, there is no suggestion that the white Texas males see themselves as being part of a wider community. Instead, we are confronted with male characters who have been separated from the societal mainstream by the bitter realities of socio-economic existence. It is a negative comment on the condition of male-dominated Texas society that these writers constructed masculine characters who are either violently opposed to the standards of Texas society or are essentially ambivalent about it. Their books are literary expressions of social comment that have, at the heart of that comment, the behaviour and the character of white Texas men.

It is important to understand that this anti-social model of Texas manhood was being offered at a time when the powerful version of white Texas maleness was being rebuilt to have a new social and cultural relevance. This stereotypical model of powerful Texas manhood became the dominant image of Texas men from the 1930s onward and the manner of Texas maleness discussed in the remainder of this chapter remained on the back-burner of Texas and American consciousness until the 1960s, only re-surfacing when film-makers or writers felt it necessary to hammer home a political point on the state of America by presenting the American public with a view

of white Texas men that was the antithesis of the dominant stereotype. The most obvious example of this reversion to the values of the powerless came with Arthur Penn's 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde*, in which the character of Clyde Barrow (Warren Beatty) contains an array of contradictions and weaknesses not normally associated with the image of violent Texas men in film.

Anderson

Edward Anderson was born in Texas in 1905, a journalist and fiction writer whose two books, *Hungry Men* (1935) and *Thieves Like Us* (1937), chronicle the lives of poor white Texas males during the years of economic depression in the late 1920s and 1930s. Anderson's two novels concentrated on the class of white Texas men who suffered inordinately during the economic downturn. According to his biographer, Patrick Bennett, Anderson was profoundly influenced during the 1930s by the ideas of the Norwegian novelist, poet and dramatist Knut Hamsun.⁵⁴ His first novel *Hungry Men*, which chronicled the life of hobo travellers, owed its title to Hamsun's most famous novel *Hunger* (1898). Hamsun, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1920, infamously supported the Nazi occupation of his homeland during World War II. Hamsun's admiration for German fascism was compounded in 1943 when, after meeting Hitler and Josef Goebbels he presented his Nobel Prize to the latter. Anderson's admiration for Hamsun was not confined to literary matters, as Bennett tells us: 'The fascism of Hitler and Mussolini had certain intellectual claims that interested Anderson.' According to Bennett, Anderson, in 1940, 'read Nazi arguments with approval. He even took Anne [his wife] to a rally of American Nazis.'⁵⁵

Despite Anderson's interest in extreme right-wing politics, there is nothing in his white working-class male characters that would hint at this kind of political allegiance. In neither of Anderson's books are there overt expressions of nationalism, white supremacy or anti-Semitism that would mark the writer as being any more extreme than the majority of Texas writers of the period. Nor is there masculinity that is sure, strong and able. Instead we have flawed characters driven by a muted resentment of corporate capitalism, whose bitterness is nurtured by a fragile notion of a working-class sense of community. However, culpability for the societal problems that are evident in the book falls squarely at the feet of the prevailing societal structure of Texas. All of this influences the nature of masculine characterisation in Anderson's work as he relates how, in his view, a corrupt political system determines the character and the lives of a section of white Texas manhood. In *Thieves Like Us*, therefore, the driving motivational force for the white Texas male characters is a sense of injustice fuelled by Anderson's overview of the hypocrisy of the Texas socio-economic elite.

In order to make the detail of the story as authentic as possible, Anderson interviewed his cousin, Roy Johnson, who was an inmate in Huntsville prison doing time for armed robbery. Anderson, a sometime newspaper reporter, took other detail for the book from a collection of real-life criminal stories, including that of Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker, as well as the infamous previously-mentioned Santa Claus Bank Robbery of 1927 in Cisco, Texas, which he had covered in a professional journalistic capacity.

All of the key male characters, T-Dub Masefield, a forty-year old veteran bank robber, Elmo 'Chicamaw' Mobley, a thirty-five year old part Indian drunk and Bowie Bowers, a twenty-seven year old who, as a teenager, had been drawn into a robbery

that had resulted in a killing and had spent the rest of his life in prison, understand the double standards of the system and its role in determining the course of their lives. All of these male characters are taken from the class of working people that were hardest hit by economic depression across the Southwest. They are portrayed as being bitter at the prevailing economic system and its agents in law enforcement, but loyal to their own kind, whom they term as 'Real People'. Those covered by this term are those engaged in small-time crime or those, mostly socio-economically deprived members of Texas society, who empathise with them.

As already discussed, the Texas press exhibited an understandable bias toward the agents of the law, a factor which Anderson well understood and used in the book. He employed the style and tenor of contemporary journalistic discourse in *Thieves Like Us* to offer the reader a taste of how those in the press arm of the Texas ruling elite reported and judged the activities of such criminals. Sections of the novel take the form of press reports, which serve as a contrast to Anderson's broadly empathetic view of these men. They are also intended to show the power of the media in the lives of these on-the-run desperadoes. The law-breakers are shown to be dependent on reporting for publicity as well as to give them an idea of what the law is thinking. The first newspaper interlude, which covers their initial escape from jail, has one escapee, Chicamaw, described in the press as 'Elmo (three-toed) Mobley', complaining about how the press concentrated on his physical abnormality. The love-hate relationship that these men have with the newspaper coverage is evident in the fact that Chicamaw, while complaining of his personal profile in the report, also, without a hint of irony, sees fit to complain about the briefness of the article. T-Dub had been described in the press as T. W. (Tommy Gun) Masefield. But he later complains, 'about this Tommy Gun they're putting on me. I never did have but one

machine gun in my life and I never did even try it out.' These men, therefore, are characterised as craving the publicity that the press offers, but become frustrated and belligerent when the tone of the article does not massage their male egos. Anderson was making the point here that the criminals may have believed that their daring activities would determine the way that they were perceived by the public, but they were mistaken. It was, in fact, the press who were in total control of the construction of image. It is the youngest and most inexperienced of the group, Bowie, who wishes that the article had not been printed. This in turn prompts T-Dub to warn his group of the dangers and purpose of the reporting: 'Papers can raise more heat than anything. These Laws work like hell to get their names in the papers.'⁵⁶ Later T-Dub relates the story of how he had been set-up by a journalist who distorted his story, making T-Dub out to be the 'Big Shot' who had been responsible for the death of two escaping prisoners, and then refusing to pay an agreed fee.⁵⁷

By the end of the book, Bowie and his girlfriend, Keechie, have attained the status in Anderson's fictional press that Parker and Barrow achieved in real life. The fictional couple's demise is reported in the following manner:

McMasters, Texas, June 21 – The crime-blazed trail of the Southwest's phantom desperado, Bowie Bowers, and his gun-packing girl companion . . . was ended here early tonight in a battle with a sharp-shooting band of Rangers and peace officers who beat their covered quarry to the draw.⁵⁸

The comparisons with the killing of Bonnie and Clyde are obvious. However, in this fictional account the reader has more to go on with regard to the character of the couple than merely the reporting of a biased and sensationalist press. This is due to

the fact that Anderson's novel is an attempt to go beyond the sensationalism and prejudice of his profession to bring human qualities and social factors into the frame.

Anderson's book, ostensibly a love story, is overtly and profoundly political. The title, *Thieves Like Us*, refers to the accusation made many times in the novel: that those at the heart of the American capitalist system, politicians, lawyers and bankers, as well as those professionals who ensure the functional operation of middle-class life, including doctors and the police, are engaged in one great hypocrisy and are, therefore, in the eyes of the criminal class, thieves like us. J. Archibald Hawkins, the corrupt lawyer to whom Bowie and Keechie turn for help, explains the reasons for his dishonesty, while also articulating Anderson's blunt political message:

There are more millionaires in this country than in any other . . . and at the same time more robbers and killers. Therein lay significance. Extremes in riches make extremes in crime. As long as a Social System permitted the acquisition of extreme riches, there would be equalizing crime and the Government and all law-enforcement organisations might as well fold their hands and accept it Money interests fix the punishment for crime in this country . . . and consequently there is no moral justice.⁵⁹

Hawkins' diatribe against American corporate capitalism and the multi-layered system designed to protect its interests is typical of the political populism expounded throughout the novel. Despite Anderson's attachment to extremist politics, the bitter views espoused by Hawkins are not radical, in that no solutions to the problems of capitalism are put forward. What we have here is the politics of loss and disaffection that permeated Texas from the end of the Civil War to the New Deal.

It should also be said that, although most of the book is set in Texas with predominantly Texas characters, the sense of class outweighs the belonging to any state, making an Oklahoman outlaw little different from a Texas one. Many authors of the period, especially those who wrote in the Sharecropper genre, saw the shared experience of the Southwest's poor in a collective light. The tendency toward Texas chauvinism (especially obvious in the work of those writers who favoured a powerful version of manhood) is consequently missing. It is, in part, the economic necessity of movement that gave the region's poor a collective class identity that transcended loyalty to state.

The prime role of Texas in Anderson's book is to accommodate his examination of the negative societal impact of corporate capitalism through the obvious example of the oil industry. Texas in this context equals oil. The constant presence of oil, and what it had come to represent in terms of socio-economic power, serves further to alienate from society those without a stake in the oil industry. Place names in the story are often manufactured or changed to indicate Texas society's dependence on the oil industry: examples include Texaco City or Gusherton (which is likely to be the real oil-boom town of Ranger, Texas). Significantly, the gang's first hideout is in a failed, dry, oil field named Derrick Hole. This blunt symbolism serves to illuminate the outlaw gang's relationship with an oil-dependent society in that it aligns the industrial redundancy of the oil field with their own societal worthlessness.

The effect of this, for our purpose, is that the masculinity offered in the novel is determined by the nature of the political point being made. If fictional men are to be used as expressions of a particular political stance, then the characterisation of masculinity must be forged to suit. Anderson's purpose was to use the flawed masculinity of the socio-economically deprived Texan to display opposition to what

he perceived as a corrupt and hypocritical society. Therefore, the kind of maleness that was presented in his book was determined by the most important factor in these men's lives, namely their socio-economic predicament. Given the form of resistance that these men had chosen, theirs was a masculinity that grated uncomfortably against the forces of law-abiding society as the author saw it. Societal forces, therefore, determined how an overtly political figure such as Anderson characterised maleness in his writing.

If this is the case, then it should be possible to trace the decay of morality and integrity, which is obvious in his characters, to the economic oppression under which his fictional white Texas males suffer. This suffering then becomes the testing ground of Texas manhood. Further, if what the male characters are in this book, and what they become, is dependent upon the dominating economic system, then assertions and doubts about manhood can be measured in the highs and lows of socio-economic status experienced by the characters. Doubt, regarding maleness, is gauged as the men move out of their proscribed socio-economic status and are faced with a set of societal rules that they do not understand. For example, in the aftermath of a raid on the Guaranty State Bank in Zelton, the men find themselves able to afford an upmarket hideout:

Bowie lay on the ivory-inlaid bed, under the smooth sheet and silken comfort, in the feminine, mirror-panelled room where the perfume of powders and toilet waters still lingered.⁶⁰

This association of opulence with femininity clearly defines the boundaries of this variety of Texas manhood. Doing time in prison, killing, robbing, suffering all

manner of physical discomfort is the core of their masculine experience. The tales of brutality, wounding, self-mutilating, violence and death that he hears from Chicamaw and T-Dub impress Bowie. Only in their own extra-legal environment, challenging and competing with the various forces of the law, is their manhood assured. The outlaw's definition of manliness is confined to the situations that he creates and exploits in order to confirm his own masculinity. This is evident in a shootout with the law when Chicamaw comments to Bowie: 'They were men enough to start it. Let 'em be men enough to take it.'⁶¹

What keeps these men going is a need continually to prove their maleness against the system in the shape of the law. Bowie tells Keechie that the prospects of Chicamaw, a hardened convict, enduring a Texas prison term are slim:

He won't last six months. They don't send you out to them farms unless they want to get rid of you. If you're any kind of a man you won't last, and by God, he's a man.⁶²

The implication is that Chicamaw's maleness, his sense of himself as a man, will not allow him to be subservient. This in turn will bring him face to face with the unequal brutality of the prison system, which will kill him.

The masculinity of Bowie on the other hand is less solidly defined. By his own admission, he has found himself on the wrong side of fate. His involvement with Chicamaw and T-Dub, like his presence in prison in the first place, is almost accidental. He is, therefore, not imbued with the same masculine characteristics as the other two. His is a masculinity not quite sure of itself, uncertain and ambivalent. His relationship with both Chicamaw and the androgynous Keechie brings his

undeveloped sense of maleness home to the reader. In one passage Bowie and Keechie have a bizarre conversation about the best form of disguise for men or for women. Bowie says:

‘A man can grow a beard and wear glasses and get his hair cut different.’

‘He can’t use powder and paint though.’

‘He sure can. He can dress up like a woman and get by with it.’

‘I’d like to see you dressed up like a woman.’

‘Not me.’

‘And I’m not going to dress up like a man.’

‘I know it,’ Bowie said. ‘But you know, Keechie, there’s men in this world though that go around all the time dressed up like women. They’re no good.’

‘There was a woman in Keota that smoked cigars all the time and acted just like a man,’ Keechie said.

‘Them people are no good, Keechie. Absolutely, they’re no good.’

‘They’re are more no-good people in this world than there are good ones,’

Keechie said. ‘A blind man can see that.’⁶³

Previously, we have been told of Keechie’s boyish hairstyle, of Bowie’s pet name for her as ‘Little Soldier’ and of her habit of wearing his clothes:

She was funny that way, always wearing something of his and even sleeping at night in one of his shirts and he had paid fifteen dollars for that negligee and boudoir slippers.⁶⁴

The relationship between the lovers is new and, therefore, raw and fragile. Bowie, now twenty-seven, has been in prison since he was eighteen, and Keechie, still a teenager, has lived all of her life in an off-highway gas station. They are, both of them, innocent and unworldly and, therefore, malleable. The vulnerability of Bowie to strong male influence can be gauged by the fact that, while Keechie dresses in Bowie's clothes, Bowie endeavours to dress like Chickamaw.⁶⁵ Clothes are an issue in the book, which mark the characters' progress from prison-wear to the sumptuous evening clothes that Bowie and Keechie don on their night out in New Orleans. They are also an indicator of the superficiality of the gang's progress. Nothing substantial changes for any of the characters whether they are wearing overalls or lounge suits.

Bowie has learned how to harness and apply the violent aspect of his masculinity but he is untrained in how to offer and receive love. Anderson confers on Keechie the kind of homespun wisdom that keeps the pair together. As the novel's dedication indicates, Anderson leant heavily on his wife, Anne, when researching the role of Keechie. When Bowie displays his lack of confidence at the prospect of keeping his lover, it is Keechie who reassures him, albeit by comparing a good woman to a faithful dog. The kind of masculinity that Anderson has constructed in the character of Bowie has the potential for change, but his point is that Bowie and men like him have been so brutalised by the system that they are seldom offered the opportunity to realise such potential. It could also be argued that Bowie's attachment to the manly Chicamaw and the boyish Keechie indicates a homo-erotic fascination. Bowie's sexuality may well be ambiguous. If this is so, then it is a further indication of the lack of definition brought about by his enforced distance from society. Whatever the wrongs and failings of the male image offered by the Texas ruling elite, what it does

have is the promise of a degree of male power and clarity that those who oppose it cannot match.

Chicamaw sees Bowie as a 'Country Boy', which in the Indian's estimation is a derogatory term, supposed to represent a form of broken and dumb manhood: the residue of the white working class who did not make it economically with land or oil, and have not yet headed for the industrial anonymity of the city. His contempt for Bowie is confounded by the younger man's ability consistently to beat the odds. Bowie's 'luck' has made him and Keechie media personalities and Chicamaw's pride, and sense of what it takes to be a man, resents this. Chickamaw is sensitive about his media profile and in, particular, is incensed by the derogatory description of him in the press as 'Three-toed Mobley'. These gangsters may shun society but are vain enough to crave the approval of its press. Bowie, for his part, is driven by a sense of masculine loyalty that transcends even his love for Keechie. This loyalty has been honed in the prison system in a them-against-us environment. What breaks it, and precipitates Bowie casting Chicamaw aside to cope for himself, is the realisation, albeit too late, that Chicamaw is vain, stupid, selfish and weak and, therefore, his loyalty is misplaced. What Anderson is asking us to believe is that Bowie, once he is allowed to see life from a perspective different from the one nurtured in conflict with the system, has the potential to transcend the negative hate that it offers, and open himself to another form of human emotion.

Bowie's decision to reject Chicamaw, and then die at the hands of the law, with the blunt significance of *Stars and Stripes Forever* running through his head, plays down the idea of criminality as a positive masculine trait. Anderson suggests that, for men from an impoverished Texas background, crime provided a number of constructive elements that served to enhance how they saw themselves as men, and how others

saw their masculinity. It provided, for instance, an opportunity to make a stand against an oppressive socio-economic and political system. By seizing the chance to move quickly up in the social scale, they rendered the normal rules of societal movement obsolete. This allowed them to indulge in materialistic and sexual pleasure on a scale that would otherwise be denied them. Engagement with crime also offers a platform on which they can display courage. All of this can be construed as a boost to manhood through the acquisition of power. By denying Bowie a possible continuation on this path, Anderson is not making a negative judgement on the status of his character's masculinity. He is, in fact, telling us that, despite the fact that Bowie has all of the necessary qualities to lead a successful life as an outlaw, and possesses a gentler side to his masculine persona, evident in his treatment of Keechie, the odds stacked against him by the combined forces of the Texas Establishment are just too high.

The story, set as it is in Texas, surrounding a gang of bank robbers, encourages comparison with the state's outlaw past – a component part of the Western myth. The choice of Bowie as a name for the lead male character suggests an even deeper link with the state's history. Anderson, however, clearly separates his characters from the baggage associated with the Texas's Western past. Bowie refuses to buy a hat on the basis that the brim is too wide, making him look 'too much like a cowboy.' With time on his hands between bank robberies, he contemplates the prospect of a visit to the cinema:

Tonight, Bowie had planned on going to a picture show, but there was nothing on at the two theaters except shoot-em-up cowboy stuff. Rain on that kind of show, he thought.⁶⁶

His rejection of the 'shoot-em-up cowboy stuff' could simply be an understandable sign that he is aware of the dangerous and deadly game that he has embarked on and of which he does not wish to be reminded. On the other hand, it could be argued that Anderson does not want his character to be associated with the cowboy ideal as it was perceived in the 1930s because, by that time, the cowboy hero had already been claimed by the very forces in society that Bowie was competing against. Anderson understood this and used this knowledge to the full in his description of the lawmen who are hunting Bowie and Keechie. He wrote:

The detectives, and deputy sheriffs out there might just as well have uniforms, you can tell them so easy. All of them in cowboy boots and white hats and black suits and shoestring ties.⁶⁷

The motivation for the nineteenth-century Western hero was the maintenance of the fledgling communities that sought to bring Anglo civilisation to the West; he may not have been part of society itself, but he believed he had a duty to protect it. For Anderson's characters, it is not the creation of a society that spurs them to action, rather it is the iniquities contained within society itself. The historical struggles that Anderson is reliving through his characters are not the struggles associated with the Western myth; rather they are the continuing socio-economic and political struggles that have blighted Texas society since the 1860s. Bowie rejects the cowboy entertainment because he does not associate with it. It is not his history. His powerless Texas heritage has been trampled underfoot by the predominance of the

Western myth, the inheritors of which are the Texas Rangers who will eventually kill him and his lover.

In the mid-1930s, Anderson lived in Kerrville, Texas, where he was a close neighbour of J. Frank Dobie. According to his biographer, Patrick Bennett, Anderson disliked Dobie, describing the older Texas writer/folklorist as being 'too esoteric to grasp.'⁶⁸ Anderson's closest confidant at this time was John Knox, a fellow writer who had shown Dobie a short manuscript entitled *Coolies on Horseback*. The story described the cowboys as being subservient idiots who worked for starvation wages. Anderson liked the story but Dobie did not. Aside from matters of literary quality, it is not difficult to understand why Dobie felt the need to distance himself from such negative depictions of a core Texas icon. For Anderson, on the other hand, the dismissal of this kind of iconography was necessary if the reading public was to acknowledge and then understand the existence of his kind of Texas male characterisation.

Confirmation of the myth surrounding the Texas Ranger was constructed in Texas during the 1930s via the work of Walter Prescott Webb who, in his 1935 book, *Texas Rangers: a Century of Frontier Defence*, romanticised the historical role of this force. The Ranger, equipped with the certainty of his role in Texas society, replaced the lonesome, ambivalent, old-style Western hero. Modern Texas society could not afford its heroes to be distant. The old-style lawman was an integral part of the Western myth, but seldom was he perceived as being totally comfortable with his societal role. This point is made in many classic cinematic representations of the lawman, from William Wyler's *The Westerner* (1940), through John Ford's *My Darling Clementine* (1945), Fred Zimmelman's *High Noon* (1951), to Clint Eastwood's *The Unforgiven* (1992). The Ranger, on the other hand, must be seen as

a fully supportive part of the societal structure. To this end the media helped in the construction of the Texas Ranger, a point that Anderson acknowledges. In the final snippet of newspaper coverage, which reports the death of Keechie and Bowie, Anderson informs us just how the media perceive the status of the Texas Ranger. Captain Leflett, the officer who led the ambush on the couple, is described admiringly as 'Tall, steel-eyed.'⁶⁹ The implication we take from the description is one of ruthlessness being employed on behalf of the state; certainly, the killing of Bowie and Keechie is cold and brutal. These law officers are, therefore, in Anderson's eyes, a reflection of the society they seek to support. What the Rangers represent is the chosen masculinity of the forces that control contemporary Texas society. Therefore, to criticise the Rangers is to criticise the Texas ruling elite. The use of the Texas Rangers in this way as a yardstick representation of Texas society has been used subsequently in popular culture. In Arthur Penn's, *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), for example, the humiliation of a Texas Ranger, Frank Hamer (Denver Pyle), served to make a similar political point.

The wider impact of *Thieves Like Us* in creating a perception of Texas masculinity through popular culture is significant. The book has been made into a film on two occasions. The first was Nicholas Ray's *They Live By Night* (1949), and the second when Robert Altman reverted back to the original, politically-charged title in 1974. If we can also prove that the work had influence in the construction of Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), then the impact of Anderson's piece was even more substantial. The kind of Texas masculinity offered by Warren Beatty's Clyde Barrow has echoes of the character of Bowie Bowers. Also interesting from the point of view of this thesis is the name change of the 1949 movie. Not only was the title changed, but the obvious New Deal/Populist sentiment of the book was lost in Ray's

film. What was understood politically in the 1930s was either less in vogue in 1949, or politically unacceptable. Therefore, the first movie had less of the social implications or political finger-pointing that marked the book. By 1974, when Altman returned to the original title, the political mood of America had changed yet again. Within these changes, over a period of some four decades, it is possible to get a flavour of how the very essence of white Texas masculinity was perceived in different epochs by American popular culture.⁷⁰

Algren

The second writer who chose to focus on the impact of Texas society on white Texas men without power was Nelson Algren, the Chicago-born writer whose fame is more usually associated with his stories of life in the Chicago slums. Algren lived and travelled in Texas during the inter-war years of economic depression and his collection of Texas-based short stories offers an insight into the condition of white Texas maleness that is unique in its perspective. After building a literary reputation around Chicago-based books such as *Man with the Golden Arm* (1949), Algren returned to a Texas theme with the novel *A Walk on the Wildside* (1956), and again with the short stories *After the Buffalo: Bonnie and Clyde* (1966) and *The Last Carousel* (1972). These last two short stories form part of the collection edited by Bettina Drew under the title *The Texas Stories of Nelson Algren* (1995). It is this collection of stories, the majority of which were written in the 1930s, that will form the basis of this study of Algren's perspective on Texas and its men. Some of these stories had also been the foundation of Algren's first novel, *Somebody in Boots* (1935).

Algren's view of Texas, like Anderson's, presents a picture of Texas masculinity determined by the political message of the author. Algren shared with fellow writers and contemporaries Jack Conroy, James T. Farrell and John Dos Passos sympathy for a Marxist critique of American society. The stories in this collection are evidence of this, displaying as they do writing that offers a grimly pessimistic view of the male-dominated society constructed in Texas by white-dominated capitalists. The chosen venue for this unremitting trawl of 1930s Texas low-life is the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. Algren travelled to this part of the state in 1932 as a sociological observer and his observations on Texas were initially scathing. He wrote to political friends in Chicago that 'people hardly mentioned the Depression, seeing it as a burden to be borne without complaint.'⁷¹ The response from one comrade, Milton in Brooklyn, was uncompromising, accusing him of 'city sophistication and Menckente snobbery.' The letter, according to Algren biographer Bettina Drew, informed him that:

If he found the Texans indescribably boring it was only because he didn't know them well enough. One could make a novel from anything and Nelson would do well to remember that his job as a materialistic artist was to teach the ideas that he and 'millions are fighting for, are being tortured for. On to the great American revolutionary novel.'⁷²

As a result, Algren tempered his contemptuous hatred of Texas and what he believed the state represented and determined to place the violence and bigotry that he found there into a pragmatic political context. The result has prompted Texas writer Larry McMurtry to conclude that Algren's work 'still holds the best claim' to represent this

area of South Texas.⁷³ Central to the message that Algren sought to send from his political perspective on Texas society was the cultural role and the image of white Texas masculinity both with and without power.

Like Hemingway, who explored life on the edges of society through the character of Nick Adams, Algren also, in his novel *Somebody in Boots* (1935), uses an impressionable younger man, in this case Cass McKay. McKay is a teenage Northerner who, impressed by the tales of the hoboes heard on the outskirts of his hometown, sets out for adventure on the road. What McKay finds in the prisons, doss-houses and railroad cars of Texas, indeed what all the characters in the stories discover, is a picture of Texas manhood that has been shaped by the demands of cruel racism and an uncompromisingly brutal class-based societal structure. Algren recognised the wider societal context of his observations, as Bettina Drew wrote:

Algren understood intuitively that this hierarchy merely reflected the institutionalised racism of the Texas state . . . The Texas that Algren understood was one in which the law – racist, abusive, and corrupt – ruled with an utter ruthlessness and power.⁷⁴

White Texas masculinity, and what it represents in terms of American culture, is central to Algren's negative evaluation of this society. From the figures of authority to those brutalised by them, those who inhabit this section of Texas manhood are consistently portrayed in a pessimistic light. Doubt is consistently cast on the masculinity of Algren's characters. One example of this can be found in the story *If You Must Use Profanity*, when Cass McKay suffers the indignity of having to strip naked and be de-loused. The ignominy of the situation and the surrender of power to

those in authority cause McKay to say of his fumigator: 'Why must the man stare so? Did he think he might be a woman?'⁷⁵ More than this, Algren deliberately sought to undermine the popular perception of Texas masculinity by meeting head on the iconography surrounding white Texas men.

For example, in the story *A Holiday in Texas*, Algren confronts the image and character of a key figure in Texas male mythology, the rancher. Boone Terry, the owner of the Double-O ranch, has returned from the Argentine looking 'more like a West Texas cattle king than ever.'⁷⁶ Terry has managed to extend his wealth while abroad and gives a party to celebrate his success. His initial instinct is to pander to his men and to praise the kind of men they are. Following one cowboy's display of gluttonous over-eating, drinking and boasting of his manhood, the rancher exclaims: 'That's th' kind o' talk what takes men – Texas men – takes a Texas cracker t' show 'em every time, eh boys?'⁷⁷ The philanthropic speech that he gives, promising that no men will be laid off when the work runs down, is met with some cynicism. However, as the party turns into an orgy of drunkenness, gluttony, violence and patriotism, the bitterness between employer and employees becomes evident. Eventually Terry turns on his cowboys with a display of powerful male aggression:

where'd you bastards be if it weren't fo' me, eh? Who'd feed such a lousy crew like you, anyhow? Ever' goddam man o' you stinks t' heaven, ah kin kick the guy out o' any six o' you with 'un han' behin' me.⁷⁸

In an attempt to maintain the peace, the men look around for their own singing cowboy, Scotty Naylor, who, they hope, will lead them in a communal, binding sing-

a-long. But when Naylor performs, neither they nor the boss understand the sentiment. He sings the following:

The round-house in Cheyenne is filled every night
With loafers and bummers of most every plight;

On their backs is no clothes, in their pockets no bills
Each day they keep starting for the dreary Black Hills.

Oh, I love my boss, and my boss loves me -
And that is the reason I have no money.

I went to the boss to draw my roll,
He figgered me out ten bucks in the hole.
So I'll sell my outfit as fast as I can,
And I won't punch cows for no damned man.

When they demand something more upbeat as an encore, Scotty sings again:

Rise up fields and workshops,
Rise up, workers and farmers,
To battle! March onward
March on, world-stormers!⁷⁹

The character of the Texas singing cowboy personifies carefree American individualism. Therefore, by using this icon to deliver a message of proletarian

struggle, Algren is turning the idea on its head. His intention is to confuse, compromise and undermine the popular image of white Texas maleness. Algren had a purpose in distorting such an obvious representation of the Texas male ideal, one that was commonly perceived as being dependable and politically unquestioning. It was his intention that the reader would understand that, behind the superficial façade of the Texas male icon, all was not as it seemed. He then hoped, as any politically-motivated writer would, that his readers would subsequently question the whole fabric of the society that had first constructed and then employed such an image to further its own ends.

For the most part, however, Algren's focus on the men in Texas society did not concentrate on workers' struggle. A focus on proletarian efforts to change Texas society would, by necessity, have shown there to exist in Texas a seed of leftist hope. This was not Algren's intention. Instead, he was determined to show that Texas-style capitalism had made the state a place where no hope existed. His chosen view of Texas, and its masculinity, was concentrated on those who had failed to establish even the most fragile of footholds in Texas society and had fallen to the bottom of the societal pile. There, they were prey to the brutality and corruption which, Algren believed, was indicative of a capitalist society in crisis, both morally and economically.

To this end Algren also uses the key structures of the Texas Establishment to further his claims that Texas is, at its core, corrupt. He is happy to cite the law and those men who implement it in Texas as a main basis of his criticism. Algren had personal experience of Texas law-keeping, judiciary and prison systems, having been convicted for stealing a typewriter in 1935. In the story, *A Place to Lie Down*, which tells of McKay's arrest in El Paso for vagrancy, the character's instincts for survival

in a hostile environment are evident. As the story commences, McKay is content in the company of a Negro companion. On entering El Paso, Cass McKay asks his black friend:

What's yore name, nigger?

Call me Mack. What's yours?

Call me Tex.⁸⁰

The convenient name change distances McKay from the Negro and at the same time brings him closer to what he already perceives to be an alien and potentially hostile environment, especially so for those who do not, or cannot, conform. 'Tex' is not a name readily associated with an itinerant hobo. The name is a standard sobriquet for a white Texas male and was popular in the 1930s through such pillars of the white Texas musical/movie establishment as Tex Ritter and Tex Williams. These men, both singing cowboys, offered a Texas male persona that was designed to be uncontroversial and light-hearted. Films such as *Headin' for the Rio Grande* (1936), *Starlight over Texas* (1938) and *The Man from Texas* (1939), starring Ritter, or *Texas Panhandle* (1945) and *The Fighting Valley* (1943) with Williams, showed white Texas maleness to be predominantly content with protecting Texas from law-breakers and then happily singing about it. The name 'Tex' was appropriate for this manner of Texas manhood because it signified a proud and willing association with the state.

Cass McKay understands the significance of the name and seeks conformity, comfort and protection behind it. Of course, his attempt to separate himself from the negative connotations of his companion's colour does not work and he soon realises that 'A white man who walked with a "nigger" was a "nigger" too.'⁸¹ As a poor white

man, his privileged status as white is under threat and he cannot, therefore, rely on the protection that the ruling elite would, under normal circumstances, confer on his whiteness. Elitism in this context, therefore, is associated with socio-economic privilege as well as race.

This damning commentary on what Algren saw as the institutionalised racism of the Texas judicial system again centred on the significant image of Texas maleness and its attendant rules and culture. In the story *Thundermug*, set in the El Paso jailhouse in West Texas, Algren presents a set of characters and circumstances that are analogous with misgivings regarding the Texas law and judicial systems. The story follows on from McKay's arrest in El Paso where, under the control of fellow inmates, 'Nubby' O'Neill and his cohorts in a precarious pecking order, Mr. Bastard and Creepy Edelbaum, Cass McKay is charged with the offence of 'nigger-lovin' and brought to mock trial. Self-appointed judge O'Neill proclaims:

The prisoner has just confessed it to me, what he is. This here is a nigger lover standin' 'mong our midst. He is plenty strong on anything black, just so long as it's plenty stinky. . . . he says he is esh-spesh-ully great on nigger whores with soft shankers on their behin's. . . . you kiss niggers' asses. I seen him doin' it gennelmen. I was there.⁸²

McKay is in prison for vagrancy, but more importantly and damningly because he was in the company of a black man when caught. The outrageous inaccuracies and racist content of his mock trial mirror the treatment that he received from the official forces of law and order when being sent to jail. 'Judge' O'Neill, therefore, represents

a flawed and grotesque caricature of the Texas judicial system. Algren describes the would-be judge as follows:

He wore a pair of Spanish boots which were out at the heels, a gypsy bright bandana in lieu of a tie, and a great grey Stetson. From the shoulders up he looked precisely like one of those fake cowpunchers first brought into popularity by Wm. S. Hart, aside a pinto pony. From the shoulders down, however, Nubby was clad only in a pair of the county's overalls, stuffed into the down-at-heel boots. Obviously he had seen too many movies in adolescence.⁸³

The character is incomplete but contains just enough of the trappings of the agents of the ruling elite to make the link tenable. His image is one of a half-way house between the world of the Establishment and that of the caboose. The hat, for instance, is neither white, the traditional colour of the official good guy in Western stories, nor black, the sign of the bad man. The boots, a recurring theme in Algren's work, symbolise officialdom. The authority of white Texas in *A Place to Lie Down* is signified by those who wear boots. The itinerant pair's initial confrontation with those who wield power in El Paso is with a policeman whom McKay calls 'Boots'. In the final and conclusive run-in with the police, McKay looks up to see 'two pairs of pointed black boots shining in the sun.'⁸⁴ However, unlike the real figures of authority, O'Neill's boots are shoddy, which ensures that the comparison is partial and that he represents a shadow version of the Texas power structure. Similarly, this lack of authentic authority in O'Neill's image is compounded by association with the

cheap representations of Texas maleness found in early and poorly characterised Hollywood movies.

O'Neill and his court have adopted the brutality, prejudice and demeanour of the Establishment. In order to survive in this environment, McKay has to conform to the dominant will of the racial supremacists and turns to the instincts that will allow him to stay alive in Texas. As he had distanced himself from Mack when arrested by pleading 'Ah ain't no nigger,' he now pleads in his defence: 'Why, ah hates them ugly black sonsabitches,' and is saved.⁸⁵ The inmate-controlled structure that stripped McKay of all dignity in prison is allowed to operate because of the indifference of the authorities. Degradation is casually heaped upon the prisoners who, for the most part, are conditioned to accept the will of those in power whether or not that power is official or illicitly manufactured.

The theme of corruption at the heart of the Texas judiciary is again explored in a prison setting in the short story, *El Presidente De Mejico*. The story once again centres on the inmates of an El Paso jailhouse. Here, Algren's white Texas men are murderers, rapists, buggers, bullies and foul-mouthed fornicators. In their application of power, however, we can see that once again Algren has offered these characters as mirror images of those at the heart of the society that has condemned them. Jessie Gleason, one of the characters, is justifiably believed by the story's narrator, a fellow inmate, to be insane. Jesse is in prison awaiting trial for the murder of a Mexican over a game of dominoes. While on the run from the law in Mexico, he has killed his Mexican woman friend and escaped back to Texas believing, correctly, that his chances of conviction by a white Texas judge is slight. McKay tells us:

shooting a Mex was still safer than stealing a horse. There were second-

offender horse thieves doing twenty to life in Huntsville, but nobody got that for shooting two Mexicans.⁸⁶

Despite his past or, arguably, because of it, Jesse is liked and respected by the forces of law and order: 'the sheriff had shaken his hand and called him "Hair Trigger"'.⁸⁷ He is allowed to dominate the other prisoners as he would in the wider society on the basis of a racial pecking order. Among the other inmates is a Mexican, Portillo, whose hope in life is that his son could one day aspire to be President of Mexico.

Interestingly, Algren's description of Portillo includes the notion that he 'looked like a youthful Wallace Beery'.⁸⁸ As already mentioned, Beery played the rebel general of the Mexican Revolution, Pancho Villa, in the film *Viva Villa* (1934), and this connection provides the character of Portillo with heroic masculine relevance beyond the context of a common Mexican prisoner. It could be argued that this deliberate connection by Algren, of his Mexican male character with venerable maleness, increases the status of Portillo beyond that of his white fellow prisoners. In such a racially-stratified context as Texas, where white men are presumed to be on top, this is designed to further demean the manliness of the white inmates.

Like O'Neill, Gleason had naturally assumed the role of judge and jury in this gaol. His bizarre rules of conduct are 'pencilled . . . on the wall below the unshaded night bulb'.⁸⁹ Portillo is a completely innocent man and is being held by his racist captors 'in the hope that he might remember' the whereabouts of an illicit still.⁹⁰ Portillo is set up for assassination in a collaboration between the sheriff and Gleason, who want to discover the whereabouts of his whisky. The Mexican is callously shot and left to die because he is unable to consent to hospital treatment. All of the layers

of Texas officialdom in this environment, the sheriff, the doctor and the jailhouse judge, are cited by Algren as being culpable in Portillo's death.

The desired effect of this is to show the pernicious, multi-layered influence of racially-motivated corruption in Texas. At the conclusion of the story, Gleason is seen to have profited from his actions. He is given his freedom and is seen wearing 'a spanty-new pair of black Spanish boots.'⁹¹ This, in Algren's vision of Texas, is a sure sign that the individual wearing the boots has attained a place in the societal hierarchy.

Gleason is aided in prison by the Jew, Wolfe, whose ambition is to be 'a "white man," and suffered the agonies of the damned trying to achieve purity.'⁹² His efforts to be white included an acquisition of knowledge of 'every Western outlaw's death from Quantrill's to Billy the Kid's.'⁹³ Wolfe sings songs to his fellow inmate (and hero) Gleason in order to endear himself to the judge. One of the songs, which particularly appeals to Gleason, has the following lyrics:

Billy was bad man

And carried a big gun

He was always after Greasers

And kept 'em on the run.

He shot one every morning

For to make his morning meal

And let a Greaser sass him

He was shore to feel his steel⁹⁴

The violent racist content of the song satisfied the white supremacist Gleason and pointed to the kind of white man that Wolfe aspired to be. Wolfe covered the walls of the cell block with fingernail-scratched legends relating to those he believed epitomised his favoured version of white maleness. They read: 'Me and Frank Stayed Overnight in this Cell Once – Jesse J' or 'Pretty Boy Floyd Escaped From This Cell.'⁹⁵ Those whom Wolfe celebrated in this manner were among the mainstays of historical and contemporary white Texas folk culture. They were also noted law-breakers. The whiteness that he aspires to, therefore, is that which, like his mentor Gleason, is located on the law-breaking, rebellious edges of society.

The overwhelming presence of anarchic behaviour at a level of society severely influenced by socio-economic inequality is the norm in these tales. Algren's story *So Help Me* tells of the murder of a naïve young Jew lured to the Rio Grande Valley by two hapless, innately corrupt and anti-Semite hoboes. The irony of the title is that there is no help in this society for those who are perceived as being vulnerable. Texas, in this context, is fundamentally anarchic, predatory and dangerous. The story is narrated by one of the hoboes to a lawyer, Mr. Breckenridge, in the form of a statement following the event. At the beginning of the story the narrator tells the lawyer, 'but you know . . . guys like me can't never get away with bull like that to big-league lawyers like yourself.' These words are repeated at the conclusion of the statement with the added plea, 'so you can just take my word for it . . . So help me.'⁹⁶ They serve to illustrate the duplicitous depths to which men at the bottom of the societal heap will go. However, the killers understand that they are playing a game and also appreciate that the lawyer is playing along. Breckenridge, the lawyer, represents those in Texas who work within the prevailing system and does not comment throughout the narrative. The collusion serves to demonstrate that there is

little moral difference between those who profit in a grand manner from the inherent corruption of Texas society and those who profit by murdering a troubled and frightened stranger in order to steal his paltry belongings.

Unlike Anderson, the sense of place in Algren's work is overwhelming. The state of Texas dominates and sets the tone of each tale. In the story *Lest the Traplock Click*, for instance, Algren tries hard to promote a backdrop in which a sense of Texas is all-embracing. He writes:

Far off to the left a cloud-winged sun was dropping over the verge of the prairie, silhouetting a low line of chaparral against the running sky as it dropped.

This is the Texas setting, the buffalo sun
The shag-haired bison with the Spanish horns

The dark lands of Dakota know no colder wind than that of Northwest Texas.
The wind that batters Aberdeen in December is no less fierce a blast than blows by Lubbock in February.⁹⁷

This is a description of the natural environment of Texas that would not have been out of place in the work of the Webb/Dobie/Haley triumvirate and it is within this overtly Texas setting that Algren sought to demonstrate his view of the profound political relevance of a society dominated by white Texas masculinity. Sandwiched between the typically Texas description of land, sky and extremes of weather, Algren offered his readers a political lesson which, he believed, transcended the forces of nature.

The male heroes of standard Texas maleness would pit their masculine strength and endeavour against this environment and would emerge stronger. However, the young hero of this story, placed against his will in this location, seeks comfort in the chanting of leftist political songs as if the act of resistance could protect him from the brutally violent, male-dominated society of Texas.

For both Anderson and Algren, Texas was the most oppressive setting imaginable into which they could cast their collection of rebels and societal victims. Their male characters are beaten, bruised and oppressed by a Texas state apparatus which has been forged in the image of those white men who engaged in the uninhibited, class-based and racial violence, greed, selfishness and dubious frontier morality evident throughout Texas history. Both writers sought to illustrate the depths to which Texas had plummeted by allowing their characters to mirror the low standards and behaviour of mainstream white Texas society. Against the power of those who controlled Texas, these directionless examples of white Texas manhood, irrespective of how they tried to push against the system or be accommodated within it, were doomed to failure. Their activities were a weak and ineffectual version of the grinding, uncompromising efficiency of those powerful white men who controlled Texas. Their characters may have had a belief that the system could provide for them, as it had for the 'thieves' who controlled the state, but the paucity of their ambition and the incompetence of their approach meant that they were fated to remain at the periphery of society.

Haley, Dobie and Webb had constructed a sanitised and conservative version of the past exploits of white Texas men which sat comfortably with those who controlled the state. However, the presence in Texas of men such as Barrow and the Hamilton brothers threatened to diminish the image of white Texas masculinity. The overtly

aggressive attitude of the Texas press toward the real-life desperado reflected the impatience of those who ran Texas, and were preparing to present their state in the best possible light, with those who offered such an embarrassing show of feckless bravado and pointless violence. All was not well in the state of Texas and this manner of socio-economic banditry, and the polarised reactions to those engaged in it, was a public confirmation of that fact. Bravado and violence in a Texas context had historically been the cornerstones of the powerful white men who were instrumental in the creation of this society. To some the powerless white male desperado was endangering the image cherished by the powerful male ruling elite in the state and this could not be allowed to happen.

¹ For an indication of the rise of the Texas Establishment and their self-perception, see Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics*, pp. 3-21.

² Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 2000), pp. 19-45.

³ Ibid, pp. 186-7.

⁴ Ibid, p. 105.

⁵ Ibid, p. 184.

⁶ Bettina Drew, ed., *The Texas Stories of Nelson Algren* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1995), p.120.

⁷ *WPA Guide to Texas* (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1986, first published in 1940), p. 94.

⁸ Peter Biskind, *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1998), p. 27.

⁹ Lester D. Friedman, ed., *Arthur Penn's "Bonnie and Clyde"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 20.

¹⁰ Penn was born in 1922 and Benton in 1932.

¹¹ Woody Guthrie, 'Pretty Boy Floyd', lyrics in Joe Klein, *Woody Guthrie: A Life* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 124.

¹² William A. Owens, *This Stubborn Soil: A Frontier Boyhood* (New York: The Lyons Press, 1986), p. 15.

¹³ William A. Owens, *Texas Folksongs* (Austin: The Texas Folklore Society, 1950).

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- ¹⁴ Alexander Baron, ed., *The Story of Bonnie and Clyde and other Poems* (London: A. Baron, 1990).
- ¹⁵ The Santa Claus Bank Robbery occurred in Cisco, Texas on 23 December 1927. Fearful of being recognised by townsfolk, one of the robbers made the decision to disguise himself as Santa Claus. The subsequent failure of the robbery and the farcical but deadly scenes that accompanied the attempted getaway were used by author A. C. Greene in his book *The Santa Claus Bank Robbery* (New York: Alfred E. Knopf, 1972).
- ¹⁶ *Houston Post*, 6 May 1934.
- ¹⁷ *Houston Post*, 2 May 1934.
- ¹⁸ *Houston Post*, 3 May 1934.
- ¹⁹ *The Dallas Morning News*, 3 May 1934.
- ²⁰ *The Houston Post*, 4 May 1934.
- ²¹ *The Houston Post*, 26 May 1934.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ *The Daily Texan*, 5 April 1934.
- ²⁶ *The San Antonio Express*, 5 May 1934.
- ²⁷ Ibid, 8 May 1943.
- ²⁸ *The Houston Post*, 10 May 1934.
- ²⁹ *The Austin American*, 24 May 1934.
- ³⁰ *The Dallas Morning News*, 21 May 1934.
- ³¹ *The Dallas Morning News*, 9 May 1934.
- ³² *The Dallas Morning News*, 4 May 1934.
- ³³ None of these men were operational Texas Rangers at the time of the shooting. Alcorn and Hinton were assigned by the Dallas County sheriff's department and Hamer and Gault were on special assignment for Lee Simmons, head of the Texas prison system. For their perspective on the events that led to the shooting of Parker and Barrow, see Ted Hinton, *Ambush: The Real Story of Bonnie and Clyde* (Austin: Shoal Creek, 1979) and Gordon Frost and John H. Jenkins, *I'm Frank Hamer: the Life of a Texas Peace Officer* (Austin: Pemberton Press, 1968).
- ³⁴ *The Austin Statesman*, 23 May 1934.
- ³⁵ *The Austin Statesman*, 24 May 1934.
- ³⁶ *Galveston Daily News*, 24 May 1934.
- ³⁷ *Dallas Morning News*, 24 May 1934; *San Antonio Express*, 24 May 1934.
- ³⁸ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 24 May 1934.

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- ³⁹ *Austin American*, 25 May 1934.
- ⁴⁰ *The Austin Statesman*, 27 May 1934.
- ⁴¹ *The Austin Statesman*, 23 May 1934.
- ⁴² *Dallas Morning News*, 24 May 1934.
- ⁴³ *Austin Statesman*, 23 May 1934.
- ⁴⁴ *Austin Statesman*, 27 May 1934.
- ⁴⁵ *Houston Post*, 24 May 1934.
- ⁴⁶ *Austin American*, 24 May 1934.
- ⁴⁷ *San Antonio Express*, 27 May 1934.
- ⁴⁸ Drew, *The Texas Stories of Nelson Algren*, p. 117.
- ⁴⁹ *Dallas Morning News*, 24 May 1934.
- ⁵⁰ *Austin Statesman*, 25 May 1934.
- ⁵¹ George Sessions Perry, *Hold Autumn in Your Hand* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1999, first published in 1941).
- ⁵² Edward Everett Davis, *The White Scourge* (San Antonio, The Naylor Company, 1940), pp. ix-x.
- ⁵³ *Dallas Morning News*, 3 June 1925. *The Wind* was made into a movie by the Swedish director Victor Seastrom in 1928. The novel's dark ending, which saw the heroine shoot her lover and then walk out into the prairie to die, was filmed by Seastrom but, under pressure from MGM, an alternative and happier conclusion was eventually agreed upon.
- ⁵⁴ Patrick Bennett, *Rough and Rowdy Ways: The Life and Hard Times of Edward Anderson* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1988), p. 28.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 142.
- ⁵⁶ Edward Anderson, *Thieves Like Us* (London: Prion Books, 1999), p. 28.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 63.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 204-205.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 150.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 127.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

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- ⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 59.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 60.
- ⁶⁸ Bennett, *Rough and Rowdy Ways*, p. 89.
- ⁶⁹ Anderson, *Thieves Like Us*, p. 205.
- ⁷⁰ Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) will be discussed at length in the final chapter of this thesis.
- ⁷¹ Bettina Drew, *Nelson Algren: A Life on the Wild Side* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1989), p. 55.
- ⁷² Ibid, p. 62.
- ⁷³ Larry McMurtry, *In a Narrow Grave*, p. 175.
- ⁷⁴ Bettina Drew, ed., *The Texas Stories of Nelson Algren* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), pp. xii-xiii
- ⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 55.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 36.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 39.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid, pp. 40-41.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 42.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 58.
- ⁸¹ Ibid, p. 62.
- ⁸² Ibid, p. 69.
- ⁸³ Ibid, p. 71. William S. Hart was a star of the early Western. He featured in films such as *The Gunfighter* (1917) and *Tumbleweeds* (1925) and his persona was that of a dour, saddle-worn but ultimately moral hero.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 62.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 69.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 82.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 82.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 81.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 86.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 82.
- ⁹¹ Ibid, p. 94.
- ⁹² Ibid, p. 83.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 84.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 84.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 90.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 29.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 5.

3. The Conservative Press and the Image of White Texas Masculinity, 1940-1963.

The Establishment

In his 1979 book, *The Establishment in Texas Politics: The Primitive Years, 1938-1957*, George Norris Green identifies those in Texas society who, in the twenty-year period from the late 1930s, determined the political direction of the state. Green observes that this conservative ruling elite defined the priorities of its rule in the following areas:

A regressive tax structure, low corporate taxes, anti-labor laws, political, social and economic oppression of blacks and Mexican-Americans, alleged states rights, and extreme reluctance to expand state services. On federal matters they demanded tax reduction, a balanced budget, and the relaxation of federal control over oil, gas, water, and other resources.¹

According to Green, this sanctioned oppression of racial minorities and economically-disadvantaged white Texans was done with the sole aim of confirming the social and economic rule of an Establishment structure whose influence pervaded every area of Texas society. The liberal *Texas Observer* identified this ruling cabal as:

The *Dallas News* crowd, the big lobby crowd, the labor-flailing crowd, the keep-the-“minorities”-in-their-place crowd, the same old crowd that . . . kills migrant safety bills and industrial safety bills, juvenile parole bills and lobby control bills . . .²

Even taking into account the partisan political perspective of the *Observer*, it seems clear that there existed in Texas during this period a powerful alliance of politicians and industrialists who, aided and abetted by the conservative press, held great sway over Texas society.

Those who worked on the big-city Texas press at this time confirmed this. Bob Porter and Charlie Dameron, who were employed by the *Dallas Times-Herald*, were of the opinion that newspaper policy in Dallas was at the behest of an 'oligarchy, the business leaders who controlled city government.' Porter described the political standpoint of the two Dallas newspapers as 'the conservative *Dallas Morning News* and the more moderate but hardly flaming liberal *Dallas Times-Herald*.'³

A key part of the Establishment itself was to be found in the oil business. The power and influence of Texas oil money was employed in Texas politics and, indeed, in political campaigns across America. Texan C. Wright Mills, in his study of the organisation of American society, *The Power Elite* (1956), stated that: 'Money allows the economic power of its possessor to be translated directly into political party causes.' He then went on to explain the growth of the influence of the Texas super-rich. 'Texas multi-millionaires,' he wrote, 'now use their money in the politics of thirty other states.'⁴ Robert Engler, in his 1961 examination of oil and its societal impact, also wrote of the influence of the Texas oil industry:

The larger problem for a political democracy is not that of a few self-seeking individuals, but rather the voice and representation far out of proportion of the numbers accorded to the economically powerful in the processes of public policy making.⁵

A key component in the ‘processes of public policy making’ was, and remains, the press. The ruling elite, made up of business and corporate upper classes and their sympathetic politicians, controlled most of the state’s newspapers either through ownership or economic influence and, of course, they determined the expression of the overt political opinions expressed within them.

Texas newspapers with a blatantly Establishment outlook were legion. *The Dallas Morning News*, *Dallas Times-Herald*, *Houston Post*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Austin American-Statesman*, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and *San Antonio Light* were all under the strict control of conservative economic interests. The source of the Establishment’s domination of the press lay in the ruling elite’s opposition to Roosevelt’s New Deal in the 1930s. Those who wielded newfound economic influence were determined to hold on to it and saw in manipulation of the state’s media one way to ensure this. During the years of World War II, on a wave of patriotic fervour, the Texas Establishment again used the press, this time to gain support for some of the most draconian labour laws ever passed in America. Examples of the political tone set by these newspapers, especially as Cold War-style politics took hold of Texas in the late 1940s and the following decade, are not difficult to find. For example, the *Dallas Morning News* which, under the control of ultra-conservatives Ted Dealey and his son Joe, consistently supported the philosophies of the radical right, described the Senate’s censure of Joe McCarthy as ‘a happy day for communists,’ and despite declaring itself as a supporter of the Democratic Party, the paper supported the Republican candidates for President in 1952, 1956, 1960, and again in 1968 and 1972. On the morning of John F. Kennedy’s death in Dallas, the *News* allowed a full-page ad, attacking Kennedy and paid for by the extreme right-

wing John Birch Society, to run. The Hearst-owned *San Antonio Light* called in 1945 for the abolition of all labour union strikes by calling them part of the communist conspiracy. *The Houston Chronicle*, under the ownership of Establishment figure Jesse H. Jones, supported the extreme anti-communist Texas Minute Women. This backing of extremists by Jones' newspaper went as far as supporting the assertion of some Minute Women that teaching the work of D. H. Lawrence was tantamount to carrying communism into the classroom.⁶ It was said of Jones's control of the *Chronicle* that: 'The editors of the *Chronicle* . . . never made major policy statements without checking with Jesse Jones.'⁷

All of this support for radical rightist groups was conducted under the general umbrella of patriotism, both Texan and American. The *Chronicle*, for example, was cited in 1956 by the Texas section of the American Legion for its 'unswerving support of Americanism'. A Legion spokesman was reported to have stated that 'Mr Jones and his wonderful newspaper have assured us that our light will not be hidden under a bushel.' (Jones reportedly replied: 'This citation for our support of God and country, coming from the American Legion, means something.')

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Of course, the conservative press also employed noted Texas jingoists and an integral part of their local patriotism was an acknowledgement of the status of Texas maleness. These newspapers hailed Establishment male figures, most commonly politicians who needed to sell themselves to the Texas public, in terms usually reserved for historical Texas heroes. An early example of this can be found in their response to the election of Texas-born Coke Stevenson to replace non-Texan Pappy O'Daniel as governor in 1942. Of the many articles in the *Dallas Morning News* that praised Stevenson, this one, which was entitled 'As Texan as a Steer Brand is State's Next Governor', had sub-headings which read, 'Outdrew O'Daniel at Polls',

‘Cowpuncher at 10’, ‘Brands His Own Stock’ and ‘Gets He-Man Exercise’.⁹

Another, which again played heavily on Stevenson’s Texas credentials, commented:

Well, folks, Texas has a real Texan for Governor. The kind of a man who has brought Texas fame in song and story. The kind that will give Texas back its faith in patriotism, in the ideals of 1776 and 1836.¹⁰

John Wagner, staff correspondent of the *News*, described the appearance of Stevenson at a rodeo in Junction, Texas, in 1941 in these terms: ‘Governor Stevenson sat in his saddle in the rodeo arena, his big Stetson across his heart while far behind . . . a great American flag was unfurled to the stiff south breeze.’¹¹ This kind of close association of standard Texas characteristics and symbols with conservative male political figures was very common in the Texas conservative press of the 1940s and 1950s and generated a kind of resentment that was all too evident in the state’s liberal newspapers.

It should be noted at this point that there were fundamental differences between the anti-Communist zealots, who invaded the Texas political scene in this period, and the Establishment. The priorities of the ruling elite were two-fold. The first was to make money and the second was to preserve their hold on Texas society in as efficient a way as possible. When the voices of extreme conservatism were judged to be conducive to those ends, the Establishment embraced them. However, when those on the extreme right-wing, anti-Communist fringes of Texas politics threatened to cause embarrassment or persevered with hopeless causes or endangered profits, then many in the Texas Establishment railed against them. For instance, on the issue of racial segregation, the *Dallas Morning News*, despite years of support for the

principle, eventually (in 1957) spoke out against segregation in Texas schools. One of the reasons behind this was their perception of the issue as a hopeless cause and the Dealeys, concerned primarily with the preservation of power, would not be seen to back an obvious and potentially damaging loser.¹²

A further example can be found in the utterances of the Texas conservative newspaper magnate Houston Harte, who in 1954 warned of the dangers of too close a relationship between the Texas oil industry and Senator Joe McCarthy. Harte believed that the adverse publicity surrounding the funding of McCarthy by certain Texas oil millionaires would have a negative impact on the series of tax-breaks given to the industry. He wrote:

The oil business needs good public relations, just like any other industry. Our Texas oilmen should keep this in mind. They have a responsibility to the industry that far exceeds their political views. They are leaning on a very weak reed when they risk the sponsorship of so controversial a character as McCarthy.¹³

Harte, who had made his multi-millions in oil and ranching as well as newspapers, was no liberal but, as the above-mentioned souring of his relationship with J. Evetts Haley (due solely to Haley's growing rightist extremism) illustrated, his concern was the efficient operation of Texas capitalism free from any hint of unnecessary scandal or controversy.¹⁴ Harte's favoured version of Texas maleness was, therefore, not centred on the ostentatious or outrageous. His promotion of the work of Haley, who, before their relationship was tarnished, described the Missouri-born Harte approvingly as 'a rabid West Texan', demonstrated that his preferred version of

Texas manhood centred on the oft-romanticised qualities of determination and single-mindedness.¹⁵

Others in the Texas Establishment, however, clearly favoured a version of male behaviour that was, at root, reminiscent of mythical Texas masculinity. Ted Dealey, the ultra-conservative owner of the *Dallas Morning News*, told President Kennedy at a White House lunch in 1962 of his preference for the kind of manhood he wished to see running the country. Dealey said:

The general opinion of the grass-roots opinion in this country is that you and your administration are weak sisters. We need a man on horseback to lead this nation and many people think that you are riding Caroline's tricycle.¹⁶

Dealey believed that Kennedy, in both action and demeanour, was not masculine enough and demanded that the President act in the manner of a nineteenth-century Texas stereotype. It is doubtful if Dealey would have chided Kennedy in such a personal manner if he did not believe that he, himself, as a man, a Texan and a powerful newspaper magnate, did not embody the male traits he accused the President of lacking.

The main subject of this chapter will be the *Dallas Morning News*, a newspaper that George Norris Green cited as contributing to 'Texas's persistent and unyielding conservatism of the 1940s and 1950s.'¹⁷ In 1961, Paul F. Boller, Jr. accused the *News* of being 'one of the leading spokesmen for blind and irresponsible reaction in the United States.' Boller, a professor at Southern Methodist University, argued that the hostile conservatism of the *News* in the 1950s, and in particular their strong criticism of the Soviet Union, was a phenomenon that contrasted with their liberal pro-New

Deal, pro-Russian stance of the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁸ Whatever the early history of the *Dallas Morning News*, its political standpoint in the 1950s, as Boller and Green argued, was aggressively and unstintingly conservative. It also, as evidenced by the manner of its support for Coke Stevenson, clearly favoured a manner of Texas maleness that embodied the individualistic spirit, which it believed was evident in the businessmen and politicians who made up the ruling elite.

Cultural Commentators

The *News* was served throughout the period under discussion by a series of cultural reviewers, but two, Lon Tinkle and John Rosenfield, stand out. Tinkle in particular took great interest in how the image of the state and its manhood was portrayed by Texans and non-Texans alike. Educated at Southern Methodist University, Columbia and the Sorbonne, Tinkle's literary output reflected the breadth of his aesthetic interests. For example, as well as writing the populist and intensely Texas nationalistic, *Thirteen Days to Glory: The Siege of the Alamo* (1958), he also pursued his interest in French culture by writing *Treson Nobel: An Anthology of French Nobel Prize Winners* (1963). Tinkle's reviews ran in the *News* from 1942 until the late 1970s and provided his readers with a critical voice that sought to transcend the often-parochial world of Texas letters. In his own way, Tinkle sought to provide a safe haven for highbrow culture in a society increasingly perceived to be under the crass, uncouth control of naked socio-economic power. Those who wielded this power sought reassurance that their wealth was a passport to a more sophisticated society. Critics working for Establishment newspapers such as Tinkle and his film critic colleague at the *News*, John Rosenfield, as well as critics such as Elston Brooks at the


Fort Worth Star-Telegram, George Christian at the *Houston Post* and John Bustin at the *Austin American Statesman*, delivered reviews that sought to reassure those Texans with money and power that they lived in a society that fulfilled their cultural and social aspirations.

The historical image of white Texas masculinity was important to some journalists on the big city dailies. It was, therefore, the priority of these writers to provide the image with a degree of authenticity. Dobie, Webb and Haley were regular contributors to most Texas newspapers, providing their own brand of legitimacy to the Texas male ideal. The *Dallas Morning News*, however, had its own resident journalist/historian in Wayne Gard, who worked on the paper for thirty years from 1933. Gard's reputation, according to his biographer, Ramon Adams, was for matter-of-fact research and reportage of Texas history. Adams wrote: 'He has helped rescue from distorted Hollywood images, and to show in their true light, such frontier figures as the cowboy, the buffalo hunter, the gunman, the vigilante, the peace officer.'¹⁹ Walter Prescott Webb, reviewing Gard's book *Sam Bass* (1936), wrote that it was 'a biography that bears the stamp of authenticity in every sentence.'²⁰ Despite the insistence of Webb and Adams that Gard's book was realistic, its tone often tended toward the romantic. One indication of this is the title that Gard chose for his final chapter on the bandit, Sam Bass: 'Texas Robin Hood'. Gard also set out to confirm the supremacy of white Texas maleness. In his book *The Great Buffalo Hunt* (1959), the *News* journalist eulogised the manhood of the white buffalo hunters against that of other races. He wrote: 'On the bleak Western plains they outlasted blizzards and sandstorms and, in most instances, outwitted the redskins who wanted their scalps.'²¹ The tone of Gard's work, therefore, was in line with the standard conservative outlook

on Texas manhood offered by most of his contemporaries and preferred by his employers.

Journalists on the main conservative big-city newspapers who wrote about film and literature did not need to express political standpoints in line with the opinions of those who owned the newspapers. Indeed, in some instances, the cultural commentators working for the conservative dailies were prone to outbursts of unexpected and surprising liberalism. The rabid extremes of right-wing political expression were left to columnists such as Lynn Landrum of the *News*, whose column 'Thinking Out Loud' ran from 1938 to his death in 1961. Landrum was once reported as telling critics of the political stance of the *Dallas Morning News* that: 'If you don't like what the newspaper says or does, you can always go out and start your own newspaper.'²² In a *Dallas Morning News* tribute following his death, the newspaper affectionately recalled the polemical tone of Landrum's work in the following way: 'With politics a favorite column subject, he was once called politically, just a little to the right of the Neanderthal Man.'²³ Paul Crume, whose 'Big D' column was a front-page institution in the *News* for many years, was another who used a mix of homespun wisdom and wit to convey an uncompromisingly conservative message.

The reason for the apolitical tone of most reviewers lay in their understanding of the dominant position in Texas society of the Establishment. They were, in essence, content to let the status quo reign. This confidence in the dominant societal position of the forces of conservatism ensured that the emphasis of the cultural commentators in the conservative press was less overtly political than that of their journalistic colleagues in the liberal press. Whereas the journalists on the liberal *Observer* made the case for social and political change at every opportunity, the dominant theme of the writers working for the *News* was instead to nurture a flowering of intellectual and



cultural awareness in Dallas. The purpose of this was to establish the city, often thought of in the rest of America as a cultural backwater, as having the kind of sound social and economic foundation that was capable of creating or displaying exceptional cultural achievements. The liberal political issues that these critics did concern themselves with, most notably racial desegregation and censorship, were not likely directly to challenge the state's economic hierarchy. The major cultural critics in the conservative press did not raise issues surrounding the socio-economic inequalities that existed in Texas. This calculatedly conformist approach was, of course, as profoundly tied to the social and cultural realities of Texas society as the more radical political views of the *Observer*, and was, therefore, just as politically significant.

What the journalists on the big conservative dailies did have in common with the journalists on the small, muckraking *Observer* was their intense interest in the image of the state of Texas and, of course, its most obvious manifestation, Texas masculinity. However, the two branches of the Texas press, through political necessity, approached the image in different ways. The fact that the all-pervading Texas macho culture was a tool of the Establishment made it more difficult for those in the conservative press openly to criticise it. The *Observer* could mock, or rail against the political use of the image of Texas maleness all it wanted, and then put it down to political point scoring, but those working for the right-wing press had to tread more carefully through the cultural minefield associated with the Texas male icon. Even if the journalists on the *News* believed that the overtly-Texas poses being struck by the state's establishment political figures were ludicrous, it would have been futile and personally dangerous to say so. Instead, cultural commentators working for the conservative press approached iconographic Texas manhood from an alternative perspective. Fundamentally, they focussed on types of Texas maleness that they

believed would be culturally and socially uplifting. Then, like their fellow journalists on the *Observer*, they sought to establish historical authenticity and social accuracy as the essential prerequisites for the cultural use of the image of white Texas masculinity. Consequently, they also had an uncomfortable relationship with the more obvious portrayals of stereotyped Texas maleness offered in film and literature.

A typical example of the supercilious attitude of the conservative cultural commentator can be found in Lon Tinkle's review of a book by University of Texas professor Katherine Wheatley, entitled *Racine and English Classicism* (1956). Tinkle entitled his review: 'New Texas Pride: Our Intellectuals.' The main thrust of the piece centred, not on Wheatley's book, but rather on Tinkle's conviction that here was evidence of Texas-based intellectual thought. He wrote:

Texans, who do not often overlook any occasion for native pride, are missing on a good bet. We are not in general sufficiently aware of exceptional intellectual achievement in our universities, admittedly dimmed by their distinction in sport . . . It has often been said by competent authorities that the most seminal idea in American thought in this century springs from 'The Great Frontier' by the University of Texas great historian Walter Prescott Webb.²⁴

This was Tinkle advancing the case for Texas pride to extend beyond the overtly masculine domain of the sports field and to embrace Texas-based achievement in more cerebral pursuits.

In this task, the cultural commentators were driven by the demands, not of the masculine Texans who controlled the economics of the state, but rather by the wives and daughters of these men, who expected that their money would not only buy an

excess of material goods, but also open the door to the highest culture that the world could offer, or at least that money could buy.²⁵ This particular pressure, however, did not mean that the work of Tinkle and his colleague John Rosenfield was totally apolitical, given that they were still required to walk a thin line between culture and what was politically acceptable to the conservative millionaires whose patronage they sought.

All of these journalists had ties within Establishment circles. Rosenfield, for instance, who worked as a critic for the *News* for over four decades from 1923, had enough influence with rich Dallas society to petition them for financial support for the opening of the Margo Jones Theatre in the city in 1947. Rosenfield strove throughout his journalistic career to promote the cause of Texas as a centre for the arts, with the city of Dallas at the forefront. 'I want Dallas to be as sophisticated, as knowing, as any other place in the world,' he declared, 'The arts are an integral part of urban civilisation.'²⁶ By promoting 'the arts' in Dallas, Rosenfield was either promoting the interests of those who made such things possible through their financial contributions, or he was in the process of constructing an image for the city that would deflect attention from the more extreme political and business practices of its leaders. Either way, his work posed no threat to the established order and was, in most respects, a blessing to it.

In pursuance of their aim of making Dallas a centre of high culture, both Tinkle and Rosenfield believed that their role as critics was to counter what was raw and unsophisticated and to replace it with their own interpretation of high culture. To this end they seldom missed an opportunity to expose and criticise the uncultured in their home state. On the occasion of the English writer J. B. Priestley's visit to Texas in

1955, Lon Tinkle, clearly enthralled by the presence of Priestley in Dallas, listed the problems that the writer found there:

[Priestley] found Texas extremely interesting but his specific criticisms aroused all sorts of ire. We wonder why. The shoe must have fit. We for one were grateful for Priestley operating as an artist, as a man who adheres himself to the first-rate and therefore must distinguish from the second-rate and less . . . we table here at random some of Mr Priestley's dissatisfactions with Dallas.²⁷

Two examples of Tinkle's list that relate directly to Priestley's perception of Texas masculinity were: 'The favorite jokes and stories of Dallas males are based on cruelty and lack of social sympathy' and 'The conversation of Texas men is as dull as their women are fascinating.'²⁸ Here, Tinkle was using the standards of the Englishman as a stick with which to beat the boorish maleness of his fellow Texans. In fact, Tinkle used the presence of Priestley in Texas to announce his cultural oneness with the foreign sophisticate. His phrase 'we for one' which, presumably, alludes to himself and his readership, indicates that he is acting as a spokesman for his culturally-aspirational Dallas audience. Those who felt offended by Tinkle's take on the social skills of Texas manhood were unlikely to voice their concerns, fearing that they would be perceived as belonging to the cruel or the dull that Priestley had identified and scathingly chastised during his fleeting visit.

Tinkle's chosen task was to promote Texas literature in the way that his colleague on the *News*, Jerry Bywaters, promoted art. Bywaters was an artist who was part of the group of Dallas-based artists, print-makers and sculptors, active in the 1930s and 1940s, known as the Dallas Nine. This group, although not immune from European

influence, took their essential inspiration from the cultures and environment of the state of Texas. As well as being the art critic for the *News* from 1933 to 1939, Bywaters was also director of the Dallas Museum of Art from the 1940s to the 1960s.

The thin line between satisfying artistic integrity and adhering to the political whims of those whose money and influence made the exhibition of art in Dallas possible was illustrated during the 'Red Art' controversy of 1955-56. A local women's group, the Public Affairs Luncheon Club, accused the museum of showing the art of known Communists at the expense of local artists. As a result, the museum was obliged temporarily to remove the work of such artists as Pablo Picasso and Diego Rivera. The incident served to demonstrate the dilemma of those in Dallas who sought patronage from the city's wealthier and more conservative citizens. The trustees of the museum, under pressure to conform to the standards of the ultra-conservatives, issued a statement declaring their commitment to exhibit and acquire works of art only on the basis of their merits as works of art. This was a clear and determined declaration of artistic integrity, which demonstrated the strength and confidence of the Dallas artistic community. However, it was clear that incidents such as this could only hinder the assertion of free artistic expression in the city.

It is important to note that all debate surrounding the worth and authenticity of literature in Texas in the 1950s was conducted under the cloud of censorship. At various times, organisations such as Texans for America, the John Birch Society, Daughters of the American Republic, the American Legion and Sons of the American Revolution put pressure on schools and publishers to discard books that had, in their view, the taint of Communism. The manner of Texas male characterisation preferred by these groups was the kind that best reflected the white race, the values of home and family and, of course, the economic politics of the right. According to one source, the

Texas press, with the exception of the liberal *Texas Observer*, did not greatly involve itself in the range of difficult disputes that arose as a result of these attempts at political control. Jack Nelson and Gene Roberts, Jr. wrote in 1961: 'For the most part Texas newspapers did very little comprehensive reporting of the censorship efforts, just as later they did practically nothing to report the success of the censors.'²⁹ This head-in-the-sand attitude with regard to literary censorship was an uncomfortable reality for a culturally-enlightened journalist such as Tinkle, who saw in the activities of the censors yet another barrier to Texas being accepted as a modern and intellectually-conscious state. In a 1961 article about the censoring of books in Dallas schools and libraries Tinkle commented: 'If our city is going to ripen into a great metropolis, we cannot imprison it in a straight jacket of home-grown morality that denies the creative spirit.'³⁰

Literary Criticism

For the most part Tinkle stayed close to his core theme, that literature was a high art that was capable of expressing a sense of Texas identity, and avoided the more obvious political themes of the period. This lack of a clear and obvious political content in his work was evident in his review of Green Peyton's book, *The Face of Texas*. Tinkle was not immediately enthusiastic about the book and stated: 'this is the face, not the body of Texas. There are no x-rays made, no stethoscope held to the beating heart, no clinical searching.' He did, however, credit the book with 'fruitful insights', 'shrewd comparisons' and 'statistics and interpretation skilfully mingled'. One example that Tinkle used from the book, as an example of Peyton's literary guile and powers of observation, was the following comment about the city of Fort Worth:

‘[it] is more subdued than Dallas or Houston, more homespun than San Antonio or El Paso’. The review concluded with the comment: ‘This book is perhaps the most readable single-volume survey of the state available’.³¹ Tinkle, it seemed, was not concerned with the lack of profundity in Peyton’s analysis. He obviously saw a place for such frippery among the mass of books being written about Texas. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this was exactly the kind of superficiality that the liberal *Texas Observer* deplored and believed was open to manipulation by the Texas Establishment. Unlike the *Observer*, Tinkle expressed no concern that writing of this kind could have a wider socio-political import. Indeed, it could be argued that Tinkle, as a representative of a prominent organ of the ruling elite, endorsed such writing because it posed no threat to the male-dominated societal status quo. None of the pillars that held Texas society in place would be undermined by such shallowness. Indeed, such unquestioning analysis could only confirm the notion that there was a comfortable unanimity in Texas. Tinkle, therefore, had no drum to beat over the stereotypes and the emphasis on what the editor of the *Observer* Ronnie Dugger, called ‘the hackneyed Texas heritage’.³²

That is not to say that the *News*, as a newspaper, did not push an overtly political line with regard to Texas literature and the male image of the state. Other contributors, whose agenda was less complicated than Tinkle’s, were willing to conclude that the example of Texas maleness should serve as a vanguard against the encroachment of leftist ideas. For instance, in a *News* article entitled ‘Texas Literature is Individualistic’, Ross Phares, a member of the faculty of the East Texas Baptist College at Marshall, railed against ‘socialistic, collectivistic, or communistic’ views, and concluded that in ‘the Texas story’ of ‘unshackled men’ could be found the essence of American freedom. This, Phares believed, was due to the fact that the

‘core of Texas history and literature is the dignity, the power and the faith of the individual.’³³ This kind of anti-communist rhetoric was typical of the thrust of *News* reporting and features throughout the 1950s.

Unlike Texas-based art, Texas literature, or more specifically Texas fiction, struggled to find a champion, or a series of champions, who could translate the male-dominated regionalist theme into a nationally-respected art form. This did not prevent the critics in the conservative press from continuing to search. It was for them a constant quest to find an indigenous Texas writer or artist who could rank among the best and most respected in America. In the 1950s, Tinkle attempted to reassure his reading public that Texas literature was, at least, maturing. His regular column in the *News*, ‘Reading and Writing’, sought to promote Texas writers and their work. To this end, Tinkle brought forth a constant trickle of minor Texas writers and placed them on an unrealistically high pedestal. In the process he also supported their literary themes and motives, irrespective of their merits and of how they represented Texas and its manhood. The motivation behind this often centred on Tinkle’s resentment over how the image of the Texas maleness was being constructed by out-of-state writers, and, of course the dark shadow of Edna Ferber’s novel *Giant* (1952) played a significant role in creating this defensive mindset. Tinkle described Ferber’s novel as follows: ‘[*Giant*] is written out of spite, instead of deriving from a strong emotion like hatred; it is manufactured from gossip, not organised from basic insight into people.’³⁴

An article in *Esquire* magazine in April 1953, written by Bernard Dorrity and entitled ‘Let’s Secede From Texas,’ fuelled the sense among Texas cultural commentators that the star of Texas, which had briefly flickered when interest surrounding the lives of its millionaires was at its height, was waning amongst

Northern writers and publishers. The tone of Dorrity's piece can be gleaned from the following extract: 'I think it is high time we got wise to the geographical hemorrhoid [sic] that is the miserable state of Texas and cut the thing out of the Union.'³⁵ The men of Texas were particularly disparaged, especially those with money and high profiles such as the garish millionaire Glenn McCarthy and the millionaire/politician Gordon McLendon. The piece caused some in the state to express outrage. One Texas politician, M. O. Bell of San Antonio, took to the floor of the state legislature and declared the *Esquire* article to be 'the most slanderous, vicious, and wicked story ever written about Texas.'³⁶ However, John Rosenfield for the *Dallas Morning News* saw the offending article as an opportunity to accuse 'New York – Chicago publications' of fostering the masculine Texas image for their own purposes. He told his readers that:

Quick-buck freelances invaded Texas prospecting for 'copy' like the Forty-Niner for gold. And nothing would do but upstart comedy. The 'knowing' East demanded such preposterous reading matter. So we bought a pair of boots for our symphony conductor, labelled the cowboy of the podium, although, they hurt his feet and his accent was Hungarian.³⁷

Rosenfield's sarcasm was designed to convince his readers that it was outsiders who had largely manufactured the negative aspects of the Texas male image. Their motivation for this was one that, Rosenfield supposed, would be recognised by any Southerner, namely the exploitation of the South's weaknesses for profit. The serious point of Rosenfield's piece was to articulate his belief in the existence in Texas of significant cultural outlets that were free from philistine 'cowboy' connotations. The

article concluded with a number of points for Dorrity to ponder, including: 'There is not one, but three, major symphonies in Texas. The Dallas orchestra was organised in 1900, the Houston in 1913, and the San Antonio earlier than either.'³⁸ This, Rosenfield felt, was enough to soothe the hurt feelings of those readers sensitive enough to be offended, and to ward off accusations that Texas was a state that relied on crass images based on the popular notion of Texas maleness, which were created and then exploited by outsiders to the detriment of Texas.

As the experience of Edna Ferber's *Giant* illustrated, books by non-Texans on Texas themes were also liable to cause considerable anxiety in the state. This disquiet was not confined to those who sought to set a standard for Texas writing in the state's press. In 1959, the Chamber of Commerce of Corsicana, Texas, refused to endorse a book by Henry Barsha, which shared its title with that of the East Texas town. A spokesman for the town reportedly said:

The novel is too full of inaccuracies of the type that has tumbleweeds rolling down the cities main streets. Corsicana is in the lush, green, timbered Eastern half of the state and at least five hundred miles away from any tumbling tumbleweeds.³⁹

Barsha felt that the kind of modern-day Texas males who deigned to judge his historical novel were of an altogether lesser breed than those he had written about. Barsha, a Californian, declared:

Texans are sissies. It's [his novel] about the gutsy forefathers of the current crop of pantywaist soft millionaires who cruise the oil ranges in their cadillacs.

.. [it] seems to me that Texas manpower is watered stock.⁴⁰

It could well be that the good people of Corsicana were fully justified in their opposition to the image of their town constructed by Barsha. However, his indictment of the manliness of contemporaneous Texas maleness is worthy of note. Barsha's high opinion of Texas manhood was confined to the limited historical context of his book. Comparison between the men who had created white civilisation in Texas and those who had inherited it was common theme in both literature and film outside Texas. Barsha may well have been offended into expressing disdain for Texas maleness circa 1959 by the reaction of the Corsicana residents; however, his choice of insult was both effective and topical.

Ferber, Barsha and others writers, including Paul Wellman of Kansas who wrote the Texas-based novels, *The Iron Mistress* (1951) and *The Comancheros* (1952), discovered that resentment against their vision of Texas and Texas manhood was widespread in the state's press.⁴¹ What the works of these writers shared, according to critics such as Tinkle and Rosenfield, was a casual disregard for the positives that Texas had to offer. Unlike the *Observer*, which saw the accentuation of Texas-negatives in literature and film as being, fundamentally, the fault of those who controlled the state and fed off such images, these critics, for the most part, expressed their indignation against the writers themselves. Those out-of-state commentators on Texas in whose work positives could be found were treated with respect. One such figure was John Bainbridge, a Northern journalist who worked for *The New Yorker* magazine, whose book, *The Super Americans* (1960), was described by LonTinkle as 'easily the best book on Texas today ever written.'⁴²

Bainbridge's book sought to shed light on contemporary Texas society. His broader motivation for this centred on his belief that 'Texas is a mirror in which Americans see themselves reflected, not life-sized but, as in a mirror, bigger than life.'⁴³ By exposing his version of the reality of Texas, Bainbridge believed that he would better enable his American readers to see and understand themselves. The white Texas manhood that Bainbridge described came, in the main, from those in Texas society who saw themselves as the social and socio-economic elite. His social parameters seldom went beyond the social strata of the rich or the famous, dealing for the most part with a wide range of Texas millionaires, businessmen, writers, journalists and cultural connoisseurs. Serious social and economic issues, such as racial segregation and tax on the oil industry, were described but not judgementally analysed. Bainbridge was more concerned with how rich Texans spent their money than how they got it. Therefore, he did not delve too deeply into the kind of male character that creates this morality. What he did offer, however, was a critical view of the motives of the Texas press.

Both Tinkle and Rosenfield feature prominently in Bainbridge's book. Tinkle is described as many things, most of them complimentary. He is, for instance, referred to as the 'prime mover'⁴⁴ in the state's literary scene and his opinions on the Dallas social set are freely quoted. For example, Tinkle told Bainbridge that: 'Party giving is the primary avocation in Dallas.'⁴⁵ This kind of trivial comment marked Tinkle as a regional lightweight and this impression was not shaken by Bainbridge's view of his ability to engage in serious critical analysis.

Bainbridge dealt sarcastically with the Texans' sense of themselves and their need for constant self-proclamation. Of particular interest in the context of this thesis are his opinions of Tinkle's method of reviewing the work of fellow Texans. He wrote:

‘Although Lon Tinkle occasionally dissects a non-Texas writer, he customarily treats native authors with avuncular generosity.’⁴⁶ He continued by referring incongruously to the occasion when Tinkle reviewed ‘the first novel of “a well-known and much admired Dallasite” named Gwynne Wimberly’. Tinkle, Bainbridge commented, believed that this moderate Dallas talent was ‘deserving of mention in the company of Tennessee Williams . . . Saul Bellow, Sartre . . . Camus . . . and William Faulkner.’⁴⁷ It is clear from this passage on Tinkle that Bainbridge had judged the Texan’s ability to judge the merits of his fellow Texans as useless. At the heart of this weakness lay Tinkle’s inbred Texas defensiveness and desire to seek the positive in all things that his home state produced. This fault also lay at the heart of the conservative press’s attitude toward white Texas maleness.

The trait of treading softly on the sensibilities of fellow-Texans, Bainbridge continued, extended to the news pages of the Texas press where, he stated, ‘while not averse to printing unflattering things about non-Texans, they tend to muffle unedifying news about local people, especially prominent ones.’⁴⁸ As a final insult to those in the Establishment press who failed to engage with the darker aspects of Texas society, Bainbridge described Ronnie Dugger of the *Observer* as ‘one of the handful of native journalists who take an interest in the local political morality.’⁴⁹

Despite this open criticism of the conservative Texas press and derisive analysis of his own work, Tinkle saw fit uncompromisingly to praise Bainbridge’s book. The key reason for this is that Tinkle saw in this book an uncomplicated affirmation of the essential buoyancy that he himself believed was an essential dynamic of white, male-dominated Texas society. Tinkle wrote of Bainbridge:

He finds that optimism is still the chief trait here, a certainty that man’s destiny

is success. The frontier spirit lingers with great power: For Texans and for other Americans, Texas is the last frontier. Ha, what more do you want? With all our eccentricities we are creative, man . . .⁵⁰

This was, indeed, the thrust of *The Super Americans*. Despite the superficial criticisms of Texas, which were not eagerly pursued, the book concluded that there was, fundamentally, little wrong with Texas or its image. This, as Tinkle concluded, was the ideal message for promoters of the state working for the conservative press.

As Bainbridge so cruelly pointed out, Tinkle's crusade on behalf of Texas culture inevitably embraced much that was not worthy of serious attention. The journalist lauded books and themes that have subsequently disappeared without trace, leaving barely a ripple of remembrance. For example, in 1952, when the impact of *Giant* was being felt most keenly in Texas, and Tinkle was attempting to right the authorial balance in favour of his home state, he wrote, under the heading 'Texas Now Has Lots of Novelists: Debuts of Cooper, Leslie, Griffin', the following:

With Texas yielding so much pay dirt to outlander novelists (note to Miss Ferber: we did not say 'outlandish'), why don't Texas novelists themselves take the hint? Time was when the answer would have been that, well, there weren't many Texas novelists. Our sermon today concerns not Texas' neglect of its own material, but the heavy fruiting these days of Texas novelists.⁵¹

The article championed the claims of three books by first-time Texas writers:

Madison Cooper's *Sironia, Texas* (1952), Warren Leslie's *The Best Thing That Ever Happened* (1952) and John H. Griffin's *The Devil Rides Outside* (1952).

Interestingly, Tinkle placed as much emphasis on the social demeanour of these young writers as on their literary skills. Of Griffin, whom Tinkle noted he had first met at a social function held by Dallas acolytes, Dr. and Mrs. Sam Shelbourne, he wrote: 'Mr Griffin was immediately and tremendously impressive. He was obviously a man of great artistic endowment, both for music and for literature.'⁵² In a subsequent review of Griffin's book, Tinkle enthused over a *Look* magazine article featuring Griffin. The critic was ecstatic that the magazine had snubbed convention and had photographed Griffin in a deliberately non-Texas pose. Tinkle wrote: 'And, oh, of all things, this young Texas farmer-rancher was photographed with, not Herefords or Brahmas, but with Toulouse geese! A capricious year, indeed.'⁵³ It says much about Tinkle's preoccupation with the outsider's view of the Texas male image, that he was actually thrilled by the fact that a Texas male author could be bold enough to move away from the hackneyed Texas male image and be photographed with geese and not cattle. This second piece on Griffin was contained within an article, the substance of which was that British poet W. H. Auden was in town 'clamoring,' as Tinkle put it, 'for an opera house to be established in Texas.'⁵⁴ This kind of cultural emphasis served to further distance Tinkle from the stereotypical male-based image of his home state.

Tinkle had not actually read Cooper's book, but the journalist obviously believed that if a man appealed to him as a character then he would impress him as a novelist. Tinkle wrote, without a hint of discomfiture: 'We have already had our say about Mr Cooper as a person, and we expect to like his novel equally well.'⁵⁵

On Warren Leslie, a one-time journalistic colleague of Tinkle on the *News*, the assessment was even more telling. Tinkle related a story concerning a time when the novelist had become lost at a convention. Paul Crume, another *News* journalist, had

been asked to describe Leslie over the telephone. Part of his description, as relayed by Tinkle, was as follows: 'Look for a youngster who doesn't look at all like a Texan, who will be dressed as though he just stepped from a Neiman-Marcus ad.' Tinkle went on further to distance the writer from the stereotypical Texas male look, describing Leslie as 'a sophisticated Eastern mind, trained by Yale and seasoned by New York experience.'⁵⁶ It seems reasonable to conclude that Tinkle, in his drive to construct a literary reality for Texas, was determined that this reality was not compromised by an attachment to any hint of Texas male orthodoxy. His desire was to see the image of Texas and its new breed of male authors shake loose from the unrefined and debilitating shackles of the past. The credentials of these writers, who, according to Tinkle, represented the future of Texas literature, were founded, therefore, on the superficial values of appearance or how they conformed to the mores of Dallas society. This, of course, meant that Tinkle's preferred expression of contemporary Texas maleness was one that fitted neatly with his overtly elitist social vision.

At the end of the 1950s, Tinkle's determination to see his home state recognised as a natural home of high literary achievement was undiminished. In an article entitled 'Texas Books Abound as Big Editors Scout' he stated:

Writing in Texas has become voluminous . . . In painting, in music, in architecture, the story is the same. Since the war, Texas has flourished regally with a new crop of creative talents in many fields.⁵⁷

Aside from the usual placement of Texas on a high artistic pedestal, the point of this article was to share with his readership the fact that national editors and publishers

now shared Tinkle's view of the value of Texas writing. Texas, Tinkle believed, had now moved beyond the restrictions of a male-dominated culture and was producing work that was recognised nationally as being artistically significant. Tinkle did not investigate the thematic core or the characterisation of these books. He was also unconcerned that of the three novels, only *Sironia, Texas* had a Texas theme. Set in small town Texas between 1900 and 1921, the book made publishing history as the longest novel in the English language originally published in book form. Despite the vast array of characters and themes, or perhaps because of them, Tinkle did not seek to place Cooper's views on Texas, which centred on the fall of the town's male-dominated Southern aristocracy and the rise of an equally male-based capitalist class, in any social, political or cultural context.

Similarly, when Tinkle reviewed Al Dewlen's novel *Twilight of Honor* (1961), despite noting that the setting was obviously Amarillo, Texas, 'evoked with many sharp, concrete details,' he did not deem it necessary to ask what the book was attempting to say about the relationship between Texas society and the behaviour of the key male characters.⁵⁸ It was enough for Tinkle that Texas fiction was being recognised by critics outside of the state on the basis of its literary merit, and not on the basis of its continuing preoccupation with the concerns of men.

Tinkle was not, of course, the only critic working for a big city daily who sought to hype-up Texas literature and to herald its move away from jaded male-based themes.⁵⁹ In 1947, for instance, Kenneth Rockwell of the *Dallas Times-Herald*, under the heading 'New Directions in Texas Literature', wrote of a 'Texas Renaissance', arguing:

Texans have roped enough cattle. We have drilled enough oil wells, produced

enough sulphur and citrus fruit. There are new worlds to conquer, for we're weary of the old ones.⁶⁰

Clearly, Rockwell, like Tinkle, believed that Texas needed a literary outlet that would take the state on to a new level of self-awareness. The old settings that Rockwell cited were ones in which traditional Texas maleness flourished. These, he believed, were denying Texans a clear sight of the present and the future. Where Tinkle saw the adoption of highbrow, aesthetic sophistication as the desired result of this rebirth, Rockwell focussed on how new visions in literature could help Texans understand 'the truth about our economic and social system.'⁶¹

In 1961, with the publication of the first of Larry McMurry's 'Thalia Trilogy', *Horseman, Pass By* (1961), Tinkle was afforded the opportunity to engage with some of the more uncomfortable Texas themes thrown up by the novel. McMurry is a native Texan and his first novel seems, with hindsight, to be just the kind of literary work that Tinkle was waiting for. Since its publication, McMurry's book has been the subject of innumerable reviews and critiques that seek to form a better understanding of this significant work. The story focussed on the men of the Bannon family, the patriarch, Homer Bannon, his grandson, Lonnie, the narrator, and his stepson, Hud. The book was set in the fictional town of Thalia, Texas, during the drought and subsequent economic crisis of the early 1950s. Almost all of the critical attention spent on *Horseman, Pass By* focussed on the book's Texas context.

In the main, the spotlight centred on how the different characters, from contrasting generational perspectives, reacted to the pressures involved in rapidly-changing times. Included within this remit were classic Texas subject matters, such as the supposed conflict of values involved in making money in the oil industry or in ranching, and

how mid-twentieth century male characters deal with the male values of the nineteenth century frontier, values, which, according to McMurtry, still had an influence, albeit a diminishing one, on contemporary society. The social context of the book also embraced race and gender, through the character of the sexually-abused black housekeeper, Halmea. It also included class, via the socio-economic problems faced by itinerant cowboys. All of these issues were portrayed in this instance within the parameters of a tight and explicitly Texas framework.

Tinkle's review, however, failed to engage with any of these difficult issues, or, indeed, any others. He told his readers that McMurtry's first novel did not compare with the debut novels of other Texas writers, such as William Goyen, Tom Lea, John Griffin or William Humphrey. The reason for this, according to Tinkle, was that *Horseman, Pass By* was not so 'deeply felt' and that McMurtry's tendency was to 'substitute melodrama for human motivation, and to substitute the details of violence for emotional intensity.' All of this, of course, is legitimate criticism. It is, however, criticism that does not engage with issues likely to lead to an assessment of Texas, Texas society, or the men that that society produced.

Tinkle explained the key motivating aspects of the characters. Homer 'Wildhorse' Bannon is described as a man who is imbued 'with the live-and-let live code of ranching.' Hud Bannon 'loves nothing but power and, ultimately, the capacity to destroy.' These characteristics are directly linked to the core qualities of powerful Texas masculinity. The overall mood of the novel created by the tensions between the characters left Tinkle to conclude that: 'This is a drama of unwary goodness defeated by ruthless brutes galvanised only by self-interest.' It could easily be argued that the most notable characteristic of Texas society in the early 1960s was self-interest. The ethos of Texas capitalism, with its intrusive involvement in the state's

media and political scene, was unashamedly founded on the principles most commonly associated with selfishness. Tinkle, however, did not feel it necessary to equate the character faults of the Bannons with those of contemporary Texas society.

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Horseman, Pass By offered Tinkle the opportunity to assess a book by a Texas author within which was contained an array of relevant contemporary Texas themes. This opportunity was missed. For example, Tinkle gave no indication that he believed that the vindictive and self-serving character of Hud Bannon was a product of his modern-day Texas environment. What is interesting, however, is that the stalwart character of Homer, the 'horseman' as Tinkle called him, is associated with 'his North Texas land and the vocation of cattleman.' It is not difficult to equate the entirety of Homer's character, and what he represents as a man, as stemming from his association with Texas history. This is more comfortable and less contentious territory for Tinkle to tap into. The past, and those characters whose values were associated with the past, did not have the same difficult social significance or potential for controversy as the Texas present. 'Wildhorse' Bannon is exactly the kind of male figure so commonly found in the pages of Haley or Dobie. In the early 1960s, prior to the watershed events of 1963, this kind of strong male, historically - based figure was still, despite some dubious portrayals in film and literature, commonly thought of as the epitome of all that was best in white Texas manhood.

Tinkle displayed a great deal of respect for the work of Tom Lea, Walter Prescott Webb and J. Frank Dobie.⁶³ This suggests that he shared their vision of the Texas past as well as their wish to maintain selected standards of the past in contemporary society. His own book *13 Days to Glory: The Siege of the Alamo* (1958) was essentially a chronicle of gallant manly resistance by those commonly thought of as

the finest examples of white Texas maleness. For instance, Tinkle's description of Jim Bowie, who died at the Alamo, read as follows: 'there was a man! When Jim Bowie was around you knew who was in command, and as though by natural right.'⁶⁴ Tom Pilkington described the book as a piece of 'popularized history'.⁶⁵ Despite this, Tinkle jealously guarded his version of events at the Alamo from outside interference, most notably from the Hollywood film industry.⁶⁶

Tinkle was, therefore, more willing to place historical Texas male figures in an analytical spotlight than modern-day ones. This may explain his difficulty with *Horseman, Pass By*, with its emphasis on the rot at the heart of contemporary Texas masculinity. His priority with regard to the characterisation of contemporary white Texas maleness in Texas-based literature was to confirm its ability to conform to his own vision of what best represented a civilised and intellectually-aware society. This version of white Texas manhood, created in part to showcase Tinkle's suitability as *the* spokesman for those among the Dallas rich who aspired to high culture, was one that was never designed, or likely, to challenge the power structure of the Texas elite.

Cinema

By the early 1950s, as one commentator on Texas culture put it, 'Texas was a well-defined movie state. It had been so since the 20s.'⁶⁷ For most Americans, indeed for many Texans, the image of Texas offered on the big screen was the most important determining factor in their perception of the state. However, unlike Texas-based literature, the driving force for the majority of cinematic representations of the state came from outsiders. Since King Vidor's *The Texas Rangers* (1936), the number of films that had a Texas creative source was rare. Whether this fact altered

the priorities of film-makers is difficult to gauge. The evidence of Texas-born King Vidor's construction of a film project with an ultra-Texas theme, which, in reality, turned out to be no more than a Western 'buddy movie', would suggest that native-born Texans in the Hollywood film industry had no greater affinity with the historical complexities and cultural nuances of the state than non-Texans. Hollywood versions of books written by Texans were made, but more often than not the finished product bore little resemblance to the original. Texas books given a cinematic make over included Edward Anderson's *Thieves Like Us* (1940), made as *They Live by Night* (1949) by director Nicholas Ray, or the French director Jean Renoir's only American film, *The Southerner* (1945), which was based on George Sessions Perry's *Hold Autumn in Your Hand* (1941). Tom Lea's novel *The Wonderful Country* (1952), made into a film with the same title by director Robert Parrish in 1959, was another whose central focus was shifted when treated by Hollywood.

The influence of film companies on the work of Texas writers who felt the need to maintain an element of control is evidenced in the problems met by Fred Gipson, the Texas novelist, who had four of his books made into films between 1952 and 1963.⁶⁸ Gipson wrote the popular story *Old Yeller* (1956), set in the Texas Hill Country in 1859, which was made into a film by Disney in 1957. Gipson's work was a mix of folk humour and action, which appealed greatly to American audiences in the 1950s. This face of Texas maleness, which concentrated on homespun rural folktales and was a world away from the façade offered by the standard Western hero, was also promoted by the radio raconteur John Henry Faulk.⁶⁹ The white Texas male characters that Gipson created in his nineteenth-century rural idyll epitomised the upstanding and compassionate, family-orientated face of fictional rural Texas life. Aside from the film versions of his books, Gipson regularly approached agents and

production companies with ideas for films and television shows.⁷⁰ In 1962, he wrote a number of letters to Disney expressing his concern over the quality of the finished script of the film version of the follow-up to *Old Yeller*, *Savage Sam* (1962). The tone of these letters can be determined from the following extract: ‘This one stinks, Walt. It’s far below your standard and far below mine.’⁷¹ The response of Walt Disney Productions was sharp and to the point. Their letter read: ‘In the final analysis, we have to call it as we see it because it’s our money that makes them.’⁷² Gipson tried hard to keep his work close to a version that would satisfy him, but the control, as Walter Prescott Webb discovered in 1936 with his book *The Texas Rangers*, was always going to be with those who bought the film rights to the books. As Gipson wrote to a concerned fan: ‘I spent all last winter arguing with Walt Disney on how it ought to be made and lost most of my arguments.’⁷³

Of course, the most common portrayal of white Texas manhood over this period was in the role of hero. High profile and popular cinematic characterisations of white Texas males significantly increased in the late 1940s and 1950s. The Disney productions featuring the Texas-born Fess Parker as the hero of the Alamo, Davy Crockett, were just the tip of the iceberg with regard to the image of white Texas men in cinema. Another Disney production, the above-mentioned and extremely popular *Old Yeller* (1957), again starring Fess Parker, also raised the profile of Texas maleness across America and Europe. John Wayne contributed to the Texas male persona in classic Western movies such as *Red River* (1949), *The Searchers* (1956) and *Rio Bravo* (1959). Wayne’s political belief in the value of his version of Texas was best expressed in his own version of Texas history, *The Alamo* (1960). Other big budget movies that raised the already high profile of the nineteenth-century Texas male included *Duel in the Sun* (1947), starring Gregory Peck, Joseph Cotton and

Lionel Barrymore, *The Big Country* (1958), again with Gregory Peck and Charlton Heston, and *The Wonderful Country* (1960), starring Robert Mitchum.

Films that sought to portray Texas life in the nineteenth century fell into two main categories. The first type offered a version of actual events, for example *The Last Command* (1956) and Wayne's *The Alamo* (1960), or the circumstances under which Texas joined the Union in 1845, for example *Lone Star* (1952). The plight of Texas following reconstruction, as exemplified in *San Antonio* (1953) or *Red River* (1949), or of the lives of Texas-related men, for instance Jim Bowie in *The Iron Mistress* (1952) and John Wesley Hardin in *The Lawless Breed* (1952), were also commonly portrayed in movies. The second type took Texas as the chosen setting for general Western adventures. Even then the choice of Texas was seldom arbitrary. Factors unique to Texas, from the Texas Rangers to the great cattle drives, ensured that Texas remained at the forefront of Western films. One of these factors, of course, was the reputation for toughness, courage and resilience of Texas manhood.

Perhaps the most overt Texas masculine image of the 1950s, both real and on celluloid, was the Texas-born war hero, Audie Murphy. Murphy was the most decorated combat soldier of World War Two and the biographical film of his war experiences, *To Hell and Back* (1955), was Universal Studios highest grossing picture until Spielberg's *Jaws* in 1975. Murphy's film persona, however, was complex. As well as the trail of standard low-budget Westerns, which depended heavily on his image as a fresh faced innocent, possessed, when tested, of an abundance of raw Texas courage, he also, in films such as *The Red Badge of Courage* (1951) and *The Unforgiven* (1960), played characters whose depth went considerably beyond the superficial. In the former film, for instance, he dealt with the theme of how men deal with cowardice in the face of deadly danger.

Texas-based films that sought to comment on contemporary Texas life became more common in the 1950s and 1960s. Prominent among these was George Stevens' film *Giant* (1956), starring Rock Hudson and James Dean; *Written on the Wind* (1956), again with Rock Hudson and Robert Stack; *Hud* (1963), the film version of Larry McMurtry's novel *Horseman, Pass By* (1961), starring Paul Newman and Melvyn Douglas; and *Walk on the Wildside* (1962), the film version of the Nelson Algren novel of the same title, starring Laurence Harvey. The popular image of the contemporary Texas millionaire was so established in American society by the end of the 1950s that it was used a comedy tool in two prominent films of the period. The first saw Rock Hudson, once again, as pseudo-Texan Rex Stetson in *Pillow Talk* (1959). The other was James Garner's bogus Texas entrepreneur, Henry Tyroon, in *The Wheeler Dealers* (1963). Films with a contemporary theme, each in their own way contributed to the prominence of Texas male characterisation in cinema and engrained in the minds of cinema audiences the stature and special nature of Texas maleness.

The perspective of the conservative press with regard to cinema that purported to portray Texas maleness was different from its view of literature in a number of key ways. Critics working for the big city dailies did not consider cinema to have the same cultural importance as literature. This meant that the reviewers working for these newspapers seldom responded seriously to films with a Texas base. The liberal *Texas Observer*, with its socially analytical eye on characterisation that lent itself to socio-political abuses, reacted to Texas-based film with healthy cynicism. However, the majority of critics working for the conservative press had no such agenda and, therefore, no reason to respond in anything other than a dispassionate, socially-apathetic and apolitical manner. There were, however, exceptions and in these

circumstances it is possible to determine how the reviewers on the Establishment newspapers saw the image of white Texas maleness in film and what factors influenced their perception.

The next part of this chapter looks at the reaction of the conservative Texas press to a selection of films of this kind. In order to achieve a balance, the focus will fall on specific films, each from one of the above-mentioned thematic types. *The Alamo* (1960) is ideal as a vehicle for examining the press reaction to films that purported to portray a specific historical event from Texas history. The conservative press reaction to the maleness offered in Western movies will be assessed via films such as *The Wonderful Country* (1960) and *Rio Bravo* (1959). *Giant* (1956) is the most obvious cinematic representation of contemporary Texas and reaction to it will also be analysed. Other films that broaden the perspective on contemporary Texas, and add to our understanding of the reaction of those cultural commentators who worked for right wing newspapers, are *Written on the Wind* (1956), *Hud* (1963) and *The Wheeler Dealers* (1963).

The Alamo

Of all the history-based Texas movies of this period, *The Alamo* (1960) shed most light on how the state was perceived in American cinema. For that reason it is important to understand the circumstances that led to the film being made.

Since *The Immortal Alamo* (1911), the events surrounding the Texas struggle for independence had provided inspiration for numerous film projects, all of which confirmed the heroic status of the white Texas hero and most of which found favour with the Texas press. *The Martyrs of the Alamo* (1915), which was subtitled *The*

Birth of Texas to cash in on the involvement of D. W. Griffith who is listed in the film credits as 'supervisor', for instance, brought the following response: 'The fighting scenes within show how the heroes of the Alamo faced their great struggle and their deaths with sardonic smiles, grim faces, curses . . .'⁷⁴ This review is a fairly typical example of how the conservative Texas press concentrated on the undisputed bravado of the historical Texas hero. Others in Texas society were less enthusiastic about the tone of the film. When *Martyrs of the Alamo* was shown in Baytown, Texas, the Mexican section of the audience walked out, so offended were they by the racial content of the film. Frank Thompson, writing in the book *Alamo Movies*, comments that: '*The Martyrs of the Alamo*, playing on the racial hatred which characterised *Birth of a Nation*, presents the Texas Revolution as a conflict of skin colours.'⁷⁵ For the conservative Texas press of the period and beyond, it mattered not that these cinematic interpretations of Texas patriotism were founded on the idea of white racial supremacy. The grandest of all of the Texas historical movies, John Wayne's *The Alamo* (1960), was banned in Mexico in September 1960 and has never been shown in that country on theatrical release.⁷⁶ The reasons for this are the same ones that so offended the Mexican citizens of Baytown forty-five years earlier.

John Wayne's ideological film project *The Alamo* (1960) is, indeed, the most obvious example of the use of white Texas masculinity for a political objective. The film also serves as a prime example of how the Texas Establishment could rally to a cultural project that sat easily with their political aims. Throughout his career, beginning in the 1930s, Wayne had been a regular contributor to the cinematic stereotype of white Texas men. In total he took on the role of fourteen Texans, every one of whom a character that displayed, at the very least, the basic tenets of the stereotyped Texas masculinity. In the dozen years before *The Alamo*, Wayne's Texas

characterisations achieved classic status in films such as *Red River* (1948), *The Searchers* (1956) and *Rio Bravo* (1959). The men that Wayne portrayed in each of these films were, to varying degrees, paradigms of the powerful Texas male image and exhibited significant amounts of courage, determination and individuality. It adds a different dimension to Wayne's Texas characters that he believed that Texas held a special place in American history and further believed that events at the Alamo in 1836 represented the best example of American historical heroism. It also adds a profound relevance to his work that he directly associated this episode of Texas history with the political plight of modern-day America and the world. Asked about his purpose in making the film, Wayne commented: 'I want to remind the freedom-loving people of the world that, not too long ago, there were men and women who had the guts to stand up for the things they believed in, to the point of death.'⁷⁷ It had long been Wayne's stated objective to create a film version of the Siege of the Alamo.⁷⁸ Prior to finally making his homage to Texas history, Wayne's political film projects had trailed through the Cold War years of the 1950s. Movies with profound anti-Communist themes such as *Big Jim McLaine* (1952), *Blood Alley* (1955) and *Jet Pilot* (1957) marked the actor, director, future member of the John Birch Society, and erstwhile president of the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, as a committed political ideologue. ✓

John Wayne not only believed in the symbolic significance of the historical Alamo but also in the emblematic strength of his film version of events there. This belief was to guide him through the difficult socio-political environment of the 1960s. Five years after his film was released, Wayne wrote the following to the Texas-born President of the United States, Lyndon Johnson:

Perhaps you remember the scene from *The Alamo*, where one of Davy Crockett's Tennesseans said: 'what we doing here in Texas fighting—it ain't our ox that's getting gored.' Crockett replied: 'Talkin' about whose ox gets gored, figure this: a fella gets in the habit of gorin' oxes, it whets his appetite. May gore yours next.' Unquote. And we don't want people like Kosygin, Mao Tse-tung or the like, 'gorin' our oxes.'⁷⁹

Wayne sought financial backing and political favour for the film from the Texas Establishment. He had originally looked to Mexico or Panama and their cheap labour economies as the ideal site for making his film.⁸⁰ However, faced with an Establishment threat of a Texas-wide boycott if the film was not made in the state, Wayne used the Establishment's Texas patriotism against them and threatened that the film would not be made at all if their money were not made available.⁸¹

Russell Birdwell, the film's publicist, mounted a publicity campaign which sought to encourage an association with a particularly right-wing brand of contemporary political thinking. A typical poster for the film read:

The Alamo will remind a forgetful world what kind of people Americans really are . . . Savagely cruel against injustice, willing to carry their share in times of disaster – And at all times on the side of God-fearing people.

At a time when the Cold War and serious issues of American national security, especially surrounding Cuba and Khrushchev, were in the minds of the potential American audience, the overt political implications of this kind of marketing are obvious. Even more pointed, and certainly more controversial, was a three-page

gatefold ad placed in *Life* magazine by Birdwell. Aware of the ongoing contest for the Democratic Party nomination for President, Birdwell ensured that the candidates, Lyndon Johnson and John Kennedy, would react to the ad and, therefore, provide invaluable publicity to the film. Accompanied by a painting of the Alamo with a single cannon in the foreground, the headline read: 'There Were No Ghost Writers at the Alamo.' The text began with the statement that: 'Very soon the two great political parties of the United States will nominate their candidates for President.'⁸² The publicity stunt was successful when a journalist asked Kennedy on the day of publication if he believed that the article was 'a veiled plug for Senator Johnson of Texas?' Kennedy answered in the negative, the same response he gave when he rejected an invitation to the premiere and sent his sister, Eunice Shriver, and his sister-in-law, Ethel Kennedy, instead.⁸³

Wayne employed James Edward Grant to write the screenplay and sought to assuage Texas sensitivity over historical accuracy by employing Lon Tinkle and J. Frank Dobie as historical advisors. The film location, which was sited on a ranch in Bracketville owned by Texas millionaire James T. 'Happy' Shahan, was visited by the Texas elite and their friends on many occasions. William Randolph Hearst, Jr., a personal friend of Wayne and owner of the *San Antonio Light*, and his Managing Editor, Brigadier General Dwight Allison, visited early in December 1959. After his visit, Hearst wrote a front-page editorial proclaiming his enthusiasm for the project.⁸⁴

Considering this involvement of the Texas ruling elite in Wayne's construction of white Texas masculinity in *The Alamo*, it comes as no surprise to find that the film reeks with overt contemporary political overtones. In the character of Davy Crockett, played by Wayne, all of the ideological propaganda that Wayne intended for the film comes personified in a suitably rough-and-ready archetypal figure of heroic Texas

maleness.⁸⁵ The expression of political belief, while not subtle, is certainly explicit and contrasts effectively with the abrasive visual bluntness of the character that delivers it. In the script, Crockett is represented as a man who conceals hidden depths behind a rough façade. The strength of Crockett's character is seen to centre on a mix of wisdom and political acumen. Dressed as Crockett in buckskins and coon hat, Wayne delivers the following lines:

'Republic' – I like the sound of the word . . . some words give you a feeling. Republic is one of those words that make me tight in the throat. Same tightness a man gets when his baby makes his first step, or his boy first shaves, makes his first sound like a man. Some words can give you a feeling that makes your heart warm. 'Republic' is one of those words.⁸⁶

The two contrasting aspects of Wayne's characterisation of Crockett, the fighter and the statesman, gives weight to his overt political message. The depth of Crockett's character gives his decision to sacrifice himself and his men for the cause of Texas even more political significance. If Crockett had been portrayed as a simple backwoodsman, then his sacrifice could have been misunderstood as either stupidity or misplaced adventurism. As his character stands, his decision is as much a confirmation of the political idealism of Texas maleness, as much as it is an affirmation of the fighting qualities of Texas manhood. It was important to Wayne, and those in the Texas ruling elite who heartily backed his film, that this point was made crystal clear.

The Big City Dailies and The Alamo

The conservative Texas press was enthusiastic about the film. William A. Payne of the *Dallas Morning News* based his admiring review primarily on the film's political content. Other reviewers in the conservative Texas press, including George Christian in the *Houston Post* and Elston Brooks in the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, were less comfortable with the film, but their discomfort was based on reasons of taste rather than politics. Brooks felt that the film failed to spark because of 'its preoccupation with sometime-maudlinism and most-of-the-time light comedy.'⁸⁷ Christian's objections fell into the same general category. While admitting 'admiration' for the film, he wrote that [the script] 'struck me as a pretty rude contrivance, full of unnecessary historical distortions and counterfeit folksiness.' He was particularly peeved that this was so despite the 'blessing of such connoisseurs of Texana as J. Frank Dobie and Lon Tinkle.'⁸⁸ One senses regret in both Brooks and Christian that the essential meaning of the Alamo as a symbolic event with immense contemporary significance has been clouded with the need to pander to what Brooks called 'credit at the box-office.'⁸⁹

Payne concentrated on the triumvirate of leading male characters and attributed to each of them the political perspective that Wayne intended. John Wayne (Davy Crockett), Lawrence Harvey (William B. Travis) and Richard Widmark (Jim Bowie) were each praised for the content of their roles before Payne concluded: 'Each of these men had the same gleam of freedom in their eyes, but each sought to express that dream in his own way.'⁹⁰ This association of Texas manly endeavour and individuality with Payne's notion of freedom also extends to the secondary characters, such as 'Beekeeper' played by Chill Wills. Payne told his readers that even characters as lowly and down-to-earth as Beekeeper can be inspired by the

greatness of a cause. He wrote: 'he too, was propelled by that mysterious something which leads men to sacrifice their lives for an ideal.'⁹¹ As was his habit in his movie reviews, Payne concluded with a telling sentence that sought to capture the essence of the film for his readers. On this occasion his conclusion read: 'A must for freedom-lovers everywhere – and especially Texans.'⁹²

Where the critics of the conservative press were disappointed in *The Alamo* was in its lack of seriousness. They believed that the portrayals of Crockett, Travis and Bowie were diminished because they were clouded in whimsy. However, nowhere in these reviews were the tired stereotypes of white Texas maleness questioned. Plus, of course, no enquiry was made into the social, political or cultural significance of portraying the heroes of the ruling elite in such stark heroic terms. Given the unanimous enthusiasm of these reviewers for the action scenes, it could be argued that if the white male stereotypes of courage, individuality and sacrifice had been strengthened at the expense of humour, pathos or homespun philosophy, then the reviews would have been even more positive. George Christian expressed impatience with scenes that diverted attention away from the main action, which concerned the white Texas heroes. Of the scenes in which the Alamo defenders expressed admiration for dead Mexican soldiers and Santa Anna 'doffs his cap to the wife of Lt Dickinson,' he believed, cynically, that it was 'gallantry perhaps designed to get the film admitted to Mexico.'⁹³ This, if true, would have been, for Christian, an unnecessary, politically-correct gesture that would have detracted from the essence of white Texas heroism contained within the film. Elston Brooks praised the part played by John Wayne as 'the Wayne the public loves – a brawling hard-fisted Crockett' and bemoaned the omission of the dramatic scene in which Travis draws the line in the sand and bids those who wish to stay to cross over.⁹⁴

The reviews of the *Alamo* in the conservative Texas press, therefore, served to confirm that, when it came to solidly patriotic expressions of white Texas masculinity in cinema, reviewers were supportive of the standard myths that surrounded the historical Texas male icon.

Westerns and the Conservative Press

The Wonderful Country (1959) was directed by Robert Parrish and starred Robert Mitchum and Julie London and was an adaptation of El Paso native Tom Lea's book of the same title. Both the book and the film follow an important theme in many examinations of Texas masculinity. This is the removal of white Texas manhood from the familiar confines of the home state into the unknown territory represented by Mexico. Lea was not the first author to explore this theme and he certainly was not the last. O. Henry, in the first decade of the twentieth-century, and Cormac McCarthy, in the 1980s, both examined the effect of removal to Mexico on the character and status of white Texas men.⁹⁵ Film-makers, including Sam Peckinpah and Wim Wenders, have taken the same theme into the cinema.⁹⁶ In terms of popular culture, Texas is a state made in the image of its manhood. When this manhood is taken out of its natural setting, especially to a place with the historical, racial and socio-economic differences of Mexico, then the challenges faced by white Texas masculinity revert back to those faced by the original white pioneers in Texas. In this new context, the white Texas male is supposed to reassert his iconographic strength and, depending on the agenda of the writer or film-maker, he is not always successful.

In their reviews of *The Wonderful Country*, John Rosenfield of the *Dallas Morning News* and Marie Stevenson of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* placed no

emphasis or importance on matters racial or social. Stevenson disliked the film because she believed it to be ‘a total mish-mash of Indians, adultery, Texas, Mexico, revolutions and just plain noise.’⁹⁷ However, no serious analysis of the film’s treatment of any of these factors is entered into. Neither is the Texas context discussed. Rosenfield took a more positive and more serious aesthetic approach in his review. His first observation, based on his assertion that the movie was filmed in Texas, roundly praised the invaluable contribution made to the film by the physical location. He wrote:

The Wonderful Country is, as you might expect, Texas. It looks grand, spacious and authentic in color photography. And the scenery is a dynamic dramatic force and not just a backdrop . . .⁹⁸

The location for the film was in fact Durango, Mexico, but the certainty that Rosenfield displayed, in his conviction that the impressive scenery of the film was indeed Texan, is of interest. Don Graham, in his book *Cowboys and Cadillacs*, says, of the significance of the title and the reality of the setting, that ‘the title is a disappointment for Texas chauvinists as it designates Mexico, not Texas.’⁹⁹ Rosenfield would seem to have fallen into the chauvinistic category designated by Graham. The reviewer is either ignorant of the fact that the film was located in Mexico or dismissive of that fact. Either way, he displays a disregard for Mexico, its people and the ‘dynamic dramatic’ role that this country played in the film.

Other than his emphasis on the dominance of the landscape, Rosenfield’s focus settled on his preference for Westerns that favour action before highbrow analysis of the subject matter. He stated: ‘The time is immediately after the Civil War, which

detaches the derring-do from the recent trend to explain the West in terms of Emerson and Freud and just let it ride hard as adventure.’¹⁰⁰ Rosenfield’s review spurned an intellectual analysis and celebrated the more masculine quality of action, without directly attaching this action to the leading male character. The film, of course, lacks a traditional Texas all-white male hero in the classic mould. The hero, Martin Brady (Robert Mitchum), is mixed-race and represents a manner of manhood that does not square with the classic icon and was, perhaps as a direct consequence, given scant regard in the reviews. The only comment with regard to Brady in the two reviews is a negative one, when Stevenson suggests that the film’s confusion ‘is best illustrated by Mitchum’s accent.’¹⁰¹ Rosenfield, denied an authentic white Texas male presence, compensated with a concentration on the physical, masculine presence of the landscape. Film theorists have noted the connection between manhood and landscape. Lee Clark Mitchell, for example, states:

What the Western plays out is how masculinity emerges as a bodily phenomenon that is nonetheless cultural, and it does so by identifying manhood in characteristic ways with the terrain: as hard but gentle, generous yet unforgiving . . .¹⁰²

It can be argued, therefore, that for Rosenfield the landscape was the dominant feature of the film, but this was only true due to the absence of a male figure who was culturally and racially capable of dominating.

It is unusual for the male hero to be ignored in movie reviews in the conservative Texas press of this period. Earlier in 1959, for example, both Rosenfield and Stevenson reviewed another Texas-based Western, Howard Hawk’s *Rio Bravo*

(1959), for their respective newspapers. John Wayne starred in the movie as John T. Chance, the tough sheriff of a Texas border town, a characterisation that would come to rank high among the classic portrayals of white Texas manhood. The film is essentially a story of male camaraderie with Wayne's character trying to restore the dignity of an old friend, Dude (Dean Martin), who has given in to the temptations of hard liquor after a failed love affair. Chance has two other allies in his fight against his enemies, one young, Colorado (Ricky Nelson), and one old, Stumpy (Walter Brennan).

As with *The Alamo*, Wayne had a political motive for making *Rio Bravo*. The actor had developed a dislike for the political theme of Fred Zimmerman's popular 1952 Western, *High Noon*, an aversion he shared with the director of *Rio Bravo*, Howard Hawks. Both men believed that Zimmerman's film showed American citizens as being weak and cowardly in the face of danger and determined to correct this image in *Rio Bravo*. Wayne, interviewed in 1971, explained his objections to *High Noon*. He said: 'It's the most un-American thing I've ever seen in my whole life. The last thing in the picture is ol' Coop putting the United States marshal's badge under his foot and stepping on it.'¹⁰³ Of course, from Wayne's point of view, there was nowhere better to expunge this negative view of America than in Texas and no variety of American manhood was better equipped to combat the charge of cowardice than a Texan.¹⁰⁴ The image of the state provided all that was required, in terms of history and masculinity, for politically-motivated film-makers such as Wayne to reassert their belief in the value of American manhood.

George Christian in the *Houston Post* described the Wayne character as 'a man as hard as the barrel of his ever-present carbine.'¹⁰⁵ In their reviews, Rosenfield and Stevenson also paid prime attention to the manner of maleness represented by Wayne.

Stevenson made it clear immediately that she recognised the film's portrayal of masculinity as a stereotype. She wrote: 'You know how it was back in the Old West. John Wayne, in a dirty hat, is the sheriff of this Texas town. He's just one heck of a fellow – quick on the draw, resourceful, doesn't say a lot but when he does folks listen.'¹⁰⁶ However, her understanding that the film was conventional did not lessen her admiration for it as an entertainment. She told her readers: 'This is an adult Western for kids who didn't quite grow up. The dialog is good, the action fast, the photography excellent and the plot satisfactory, if painfully predictable.'¹⁰⁷

Stevenson did have one problem with the film and that centred on its excessive violence. She wrote: 'Outside of a war-movie, there's hardly ever been so many turned up toes as you'll find in *Rio Bravo*.'¹⁰⁸ Stevenson, it seemed, would have been more comfortable with the standard sanitised version of Western violence, where men die at the hands of the hero in numbers that are culturally acceptable. The iconic value of Wayne's character was that, despite his propensity for violence, he was on the side of what was commonly accepted as good, that is, law and order and the maintenance of 'civilised' society. Overt and extreme use of violence could make the icon look to be out of control and that would itself serve no useful political purpose. Stevenson described the character Colorado Ryan, played by teenage songster Ricky Nelson, as follows: 'Ricky sings and kills other gunmen. Since he joins Wayne's motley little crew and wears a badge, the slaughter is legal and not murder.'¹⁰⁹ Stevenson's negative reaction to the inordinate amount of killing in *Rio Bravo* serves as a reminder of the limitations that are placed on the icon at times in cultural terms. Stevenson was also a rare woman in the overwhelmingly male world of Texas journalism and this may help explain her negative reaction to extreme violence.

The use of excessive and anarchic violence would over time become one of the methods used by writers and film-makers in the 1960s and beyond in films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) and, ultimately, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), and in books such as Forrest Carter's *The Vengeance Trail of Josey Wales* (1976) or Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* (1985), as a means of debunking the Texas male stereotype. However, in the 1950s, the Texas hero, in his role as a tool of society, was expected to conform, at least by the critics in the conservative Texas press, to the projected standards of that society. There are obvious potential dangers for the status of the hero if he is engaged in chaotic, uncontrolled violence, especially when he is also supposedly instrumental in creating 'civilised' society. Rosenfield referred to Wayne's group of heroes as the 'forces of righteousness' and Stevenson called them 'the good guys'.¹¹⁰ If this image was to be maintained, then the prevailing social restraints of society had to be adhered to. Limitations on the excesses of the Texas icon are not confined to violence. Other behavioural aspects of the white Texas male, such as sexual behaviour and orientation, an acceptance of racial separateness and a pursuit of power are expected to be in line with those of a hero who represents the conservative status quo.

Rosenfield opened his review with the following: 'Rio Bravo . . . features the competent and intrepid virility of John Wayne.' He then went on to describe the action:

In its first three minutes, Wayne is clobbered, another man knocked out and still another murdered. The wages of sin are ultimately death and the rewards of virtue are ultimately peace and such quiet as Mr Wayne can arrange with a prairie spitfire (Angie Dickinson). Since he has tamed so much, he can

possibly handle her too.¹¹¹

Rosenfield's tone, while confirming the strong masculine status of Wayne, verged on the condescending and reflected his critical view of the formulaic nature of the storyline. Half-way through the review, he found it necessary to launch into a defensive discussion of the history of the Western and the genre's prospects for the future. Rosenfield wrote:

The Western, which began in penny-dreadful novels of the last century, became a motion picture staple in the first decade of this century. It now keeps TV alive and is under serious consideration by the scholars. Unable to sneer it out of existence for seventy-five years, the pundits now accept it as the authentic American folklore, almost as popular abroad as on Elm St. Its elements are formalised much in the manner of the Oriental Play. The populace of all strata respond to it. The diploma plus enshrinements in MA and PhD may now be the kiss of death. The fatal day, however, will not arrive before *Rio Bravo*. There is still no call for a Society for the Conservation of the Good Sheriff and the Badman.¹¹²

This defence of the Western genre is also a justification of the masculine qualities contained within it. If the genre is treated with disdain, its effectiveness as a cultural tool of the Establishment is negated. Emasculation of the Texas icon via cultural condescension was not the role of the Establishment press. This method of debunking the Western myth would come later. In the meantime, critics such as Rosenfield and Stevenson had to walk a thin line between cultural taste and political conformity.

Films on Contemporary Texas

The common link between the films to be discussed in this section – *Giant* (1956), *Written on the Wind* (1956), *Hud* (1963) and *The Wheeler Dealers* (1963) – is oil. As previously noted, the oil industry and those men who benefited from it became the most visual personification of contemporary white Texas maleness in the late 1940s and 1950s.

In general terms, the *Texas Observer* relished the existence of the Texas 'big rich'. This type of Texan may have represented the socio-political antithesis of where the newspaper believed that Texas should be in terms of human progress, but the existence of these ostentatious millionaires gave the *Observer* ample opportunity to react to what they represented in terms of blunt capitalistic excess and political impropriety. The conservative press had similarly mixed feelings. Journalists, who aspired to greater artistic awareness for themselves and for their readers, were generally appalled by the crude expressions of wealth by some sections of the newly rich. However, no matter how unsophisticated and boorish, the ultra-rich represented existing or potential power and influence in Texas and no ambitious or established journalist could afford to ignore that. Serious outright condemnation of the 'big rich' was, therefore, unusual and was often replaced by the mild admonition of gentle humour.

Where the *Texas Observer* saw a social pariah behind every Hollywood-inspired oil derrick, the conservative press, for the most part, eschewed the societal aspects of these films. Instead, they discussed at length on the personal cost, on how the lives of

individuals were disrupted through contact with the ethos of the oil industry and the wealth that it generated.

With Douglas Sirk's *Written on the Wind* (1956), for instance, the overwhelming tendency of film reviewers in the conservative press was to separate the human frailty of the characters from their Texas social context. At the heart of Sirk's melodrama lay the spoilt offspring of Texas millionaires who, unable to cope with paternal expectation and riches, degenerate into paranoid hysteria. The male sibling, Kyle Hadley (Robert Stack), is portrayed as being weak of character, violent and drunken and is, therefore, unflatteringly set against his poor but capable friend, Mitch Wayne (Rock Hudson), and the film ends with Hadley's death. The clear Texas setting and the association of the first generation Texas rich with an inability to cope with their responsibilities and wealth would lead most observers to question the societal source of this malaise.

The thrust of Frank Gagnard's review in the *Dallas Morning News* was typical.

He wrote:

Written on the Wind . . . transpires among the Lone Star State's oil rich, whose problems in this instance are more glandular than geographical. The emphasis in the new picture has such a boundaryless application that locale merely provides vast income and straight highways for Jaguar racing to the nearest motel. Hardly less regional are the tortured souls from Robert Wilder's novel.¹¹³

Reviews in the *Houston Post* and the *Austin American-Statesman* similarly absolved wealthy Texas society for any responsibility for the breakdown of civilised order and

morality. George Christian, in the *Houston Post*, resisted the temptation to look more closely at the societal causes of the misery affecting these children of the rich, and wrote instead of 'internal confusions'.¹¹⁴

It was more difficult for those in the conservative Texas press to ignore the wider societal context of *Giant*, which was released in the same year. No story engaged the Texas public with the idea of its own identity, and with the kind of socio-economically powerful and politically influential men who were at the heart of the crucial oil and ranching industries, than Edna Ferber's novel *Giant*. On its release as a film *Giant* became an outstanding success, breaking attendance records across the state that had been in place since the release of *Gone With the Wind* in 1939. John Bustin, writing in the *Austin-American Statesman* on 15 November 1956, told of the impact of the film in the state capital:

Nobody had any idea of just how potent a winner it could be until the film actually came to town. And they still don't know, because even after a full week on the screen, *Giant* is still going strong. It is, in short, the most spectacular picture engagement ever seen in Austin.¹¹⁵

The reaction of Austin's cinema-going public was mirrored across the state and Bustin's enthusiastic reaction to the box-office phenomenon was typical.

The thrust of the story relied heavily on the conflict between two white Texans, Jordan Benedict and Jett Rink. Over the span of three generations, these male figures contest a range of personal, domestic, economic and societal issues. The most important of the latter are economic and racial. Rink's character is a loner who starts off bitterly dirt poor and becomes flamboyantly oil-rich and drunken, while Benedict

is a patriarch who starts off land-rich, as the owner of the two and a half million acre ranch, Realta, and becomes both land and oil-rich. In the process, the tale aspires to comment on the birth and rise to prominence of the Texas 'big rich' and the demotion of cattle culture as a way of life in Texas. Benedict's wife, Leslie, a non-Texan, involves herself, against her racist husband's better judgement, in the welfare of the Mexican migratory workers who live off the Benedict ranch and Benedict's son compounds the racial tension by marrying a Mexican girl. The characterisation of white Texas masculinity in Ferber's original novel is blunt and one-dimensional. Texas men in this literary context are grossly stereotypical in habit, attitude and appearance. Ferber described her version of white Texas men, who are gathered together for a social occasion, as follows:

The distinguished guests were engulfed in a maelstrom of boots, spurs, ten-gallon hats, six-foot men . . . The men – great mahogany-faced men bred on beef – stood close together, shoulder to shoulder, as male as bulls, massive of shoulder, slim of flank, powerful, quiet and purposeful as diesel engines.¹¹⁶

This is the kind of clichéd caricature that allowed those cultural commentators in Texas who proclaimed concern with the image of the state, and sought to analyse the usages of the white Texas male icon, to dismiss Ferber's work as unoriginal and meaningless nonsense. As will be discussed presently, the *Observer* saw *Giant*, both book and film, as an opportunity to mock knowingly and accusingly at the excesses of the Texas rich. Reviewers in the conservative press, however, approached the crass male stereotypes and the representations of Texas society contained within the story from a different perspective.

John Rosenfield of the *Dallas Morning News*, in his review of the film version of *Giant*, acknowledged the relevance of the racial and socio-economic factors raised in the film, but then proceeded to cast doubts on the contemporary relevance of such accusations. He wrote:

Miss Ferber made broad the racial discriminations against Mexicans in the border counties. She also has the Mexican ranch hands existing in squalor while their Anglo-Saxon bosses live it up in mansions with regal entourages, private swimming pools with unlimited charge accounts at Neiman's. Every two years the lords of the realm put their heads together and decide how the biennial primaries are to go.¹¹⁷

Rosenfield believed that the world that both Ferber and Stevens portrayed would soon be consigned to the past.

He did, however, concur with those critics, most notably in the *Observer*, who had complained about the hyped characterisation of the Texas rich, but suggested that some distortion of character was justified and that the class of wealthy buffoon portrayed in the film was not difficult to identify. He stated:

Several figures in it may have been modelled after well-known flamboyant contemporaries. But if these contemporaries didn't bait such cartooning why are they so flamboyant? The hotel opening . . . is the sort of melee commonly called Hollywoodian. Has there never been such a carousel in this state? Think back a few years . . .¹¹⁸

Rosenfield was alluding here to the opening of Glenn McCarthy's Shamrock Hotel in Houston in 1949. McCarthy, the King of the Wildcatters, ranked among the most flamboyant of the Texas millionaires. It is significant that Rosenfield, as a self-appointed representative of all that was culturally sound in Texas society, should distance himself from the class of rich Texan who would choose to wallow in such shows of ostentation.

Rosenfield cited the excesses of 'flamboyant' contemporary Texans and asked, accusingly, why, if they wished to avoid 'cartooning', were their excesses so public?¹¹⁹ In the main, however, he assured his readers that the unsavoury and asinine popular image of wealthy Texas masculinity was not representative of the whole picture and was but a moment in history. He wrote:

These are, however, dark shadings on a wider canvas . . . the Texas ranch and oil pool are outposts of a feudal society that has not yet outlived its function.

Some of the landed barons are quite nice people. The post-war generation promises even nicer.¹²⁰

Disappointingly, Rosenfield, in this forward-looking defence of the state's ruling elite, did not expand on what he believed was the function of Texas's 'feudal society', as this could have provided a more profound insight into his views of those who occupied the higher echelons of the Texas power structure. His role as 'cultural arbiter of Dallas' was to move the rich on to a level that was beyond the public gaze.¹²¹ Subtlety in style, taste and action would avoid the kind of negative and potentially destructive lampooning that marked the lives of the first generations of the

‘big rich’. Thereafter, the Establishment could enjoy their wealth and their political control free from unnecessary criticism prompted by public excess.

The differences in approach between the liberal press and their conservative rivals centred on the key criticisms of Texas contained within the storyline of *Giant* and what this fundamentally negative critique represented in broad social terms. Rosenfield readily admitted that the more pointed criticisms aimed at Texas society had a basis in reality. He went on to say, however, that *Giant* ‘stresses the human versatility of its theme rather than its locale.’¹²² In other words he was making the same point as Gagnard was about *Written on the Wind*, that the problems faced by the characters in the film could be played out and dealt with in a similar fashion anywhere.

Rosenfield also believed that the director of *Giant*, George Stevens had deliberately distanced himself from an overt attack on Texas. His reasons for supposing this were twofold. The first centred on the possibility of an unlikely state-wide boycott by the Texas movie-going public and the consequent economic implications. Rosenfield wrote: ‘the furore disturbed producer George Stevens . . . if Texans should resent it to the point of ignoring the picture, there could be a hazardous depletion of revenue expenditure.’¹²³ Secondly, Rosenfield expressed concern as to the durability of the Texas image as it was most commonly offered, by outsiders, to the American public. He believed that Stevens would have been aware of this and would, therefore, have sought to avoid it. He told his readers: ‘Most of the U. S. not included in the Empire of Texas is heartily weary of Texas grandiosity, although most of it has been caricatured by outside magazine writers and not by Texans themselves – those shrinking violets.’¹²⁴

As we have seen, Rosenfield readily acknowledged that the film's exposure of the racial and socio-economic disparities in Texas society constituted a real and serious problem. However, given that he was not renowned for expressing concern for such inequalities, it is reasonable to assume that his concern centred more on how this portrayal of the state impacted on the image of Texas than it did on the real social consequence of these problems.

Rosenfield concluded his review with an assessment of the relevance of the film's public brawl scene in which Benedict physically challenges the raw and violent racism of the owner of a small diner. The character of Benedict, in this instance, contains all of the standard accoutrements of the male Texas icon. To the symbolic accompaniment of the song *The Yellow Rose of Texas*, Benedict challenges, fights and is beaten by the brutish character, Sarge (Mickey Wilson), because the man has racially insulted Benedict's mixed-race family. The scene contains much that is socially relevant. However, what is immediately obvious is the difference in the socio-economic power held by the two combatants. Sarge, physical strong but economically limited, is initially deferential to the Benedict name, but his acute sense of racial superiority transcends his class-based subservience. The image projected in this scene by the super-rich Benedict, meets with the approval of Rosenfield, who states, 'now he is a hero in the eyes of Leslie [his wife] . . . who has not always approved. For Bick was moved this time by the sheer injustice of the thing.'¹²⁵

That Benedict's display of righteous indignation, backed up with physical violence and courage, should have stirred Rosenfield's usually dormant interest in the social relevance of the physical façade of the Texas male image tells us much. Benedict is the Establishment 'insider' through whom this class of wealthy Texas patriarch is judged. When Rosenfield wrote of the weariness of the rest of America for things

Texan, he was stating that the image of Texas excess, most obviously propagated by men with an excess of financial riches, was, in his cultured opinion, not appropriate if that class was to garner continuing respect and hold power. Benedict does not represent Texas excess: he, in fact, represents the overtly-masculine frontier standards of old Texas money. When Benedict sees the light of anti-racism on the road to Realta, his transformation is judged by Rosenfield to reflect well on these masculine values.

On the other hand, the crass, nouveau riche image of Texas masculinity, personified in the character of Jett Rink (James Dean), was deemed by Rosenfield to be negative. In a 1961 review of *Giant*, occasioned by the film's re-release, Rosenfield wrote of Dean and the role he played in the movie:

Dean was a temperamental beatnik in a beatnik part. Poor, orphaned and pushed around in his youth . . . he suddenly found himself . . . on top of the world. He built a hotel in Houston, the showiest hostelry in creation, and invited the famous and the wealthy to a brawl of an opening. There was also tragedy in it.¹²⁶

Rink represents the 'outsider' in this context whose behaviour is not conducive to the furtherance of the image of wealthy white Texas masculinity. It should be understood that money alone was not enough to admit the rich, especially the new oil-rich, into the inner sanctums of Texas, especially Dallas, society. A San Antonio museum curator, speaking of the divisions among the Texas rich, said in 1977:

Texas money used to have different odors. Cattle money used to have the most

cachet, merchandising was acceptable and oil money was nouveau. But the oil money usually came from land that had been owned for a long while, so oil money, too, became okay.¹²⁷

Rosenfield, as the self-appointed cultural emissary of the Dallas bourbons, clearly believed that the established stereotype, of courage, violence and limited racial enlightenment in the face of adversity, was a more socially advantageous front for the rich Texas male than that of the loud, bragging, clownish buffoonery of the Rink/McCarthy nouveau riche character.

Interestingly, the corresponding 'diner' episode in Ferber's novel does not involve the locking of male horns and is an altogether quieter and, on the Benedict side, an exclusively feminine affair. It is a testament to the powerful visual tradition in movies of the Texas male icon that Stevens felt the need to alter Ferber's story and incorporate this kind of masculine, bullish presence into the film.¹²⁸ It is even more informative for the purpose of this thesis that Rosenfield chose to comment on it.

Despite the film's liberal, racially-inclusive ending, where the white and Tejano children play happily together, Rosenfield, writing in the conservative *News*, took great satisfaction from the film. For Rosenfield, *Giant* served to confirm his view that the rough edges were being taken from Texas society and that the influential Texas rich would be able to look forward to a prosperous and culturally-enlightened future free from the unnecessary distraction of overt racial prejudice. The values of old Texas, which, according to the image-makers, eschewed the promise of easy money in favour of hard work, honour, dignity and an appreciation of the land, were seen to be alive and well, even if it was well hidden behind the garish façade of the new Texas rich. Some of these positive values were encapsulated, at least for John

Rosenfield, in Bick Benedict's willingness physically to confront those whom he believed were guilty of preventing Texas from progressing in terms of racial harmony. There was, however, no indication from Benedict's character, or from Rosenfield review of his behaviour, of just how the Texas rich could aid the elimination of the socio-economic iniquities that were, at least, a contributing factor in such disharmony.

Hud

Seven years after the release of *Giant*, and Rosenfield's defensive critique of the film, the critic was given the opportunity to review another film with an overtly Texas contemporary theme. Like *Giant*, Martin Ritt's *Hud* (1963) centred on how the morality of new money threatened the cultural values of wealthy Texas. *Hud* was the first Texas-based film since *Giant* and *Written on the Wind* to explore in a serious fashion how those in Texas with money and influence dealt with their personal, social and cultural responsibilities. It is also, before or since, the most intensive cinematic examination of the character of a contemporary white Texas male ever to come out of Hollywood.

The film was based upon Larry McMurtry's first novel *Horseman, Pass By* and, unlike the book, it focussed firmly on the figure of Hud Bannon (Paul Newman). The film was scripted by Harriet Frank, Jr. and Irving Ravetch, who had had the writing credits for the film version of William Humphrey's East Texas-based novel *Home From the Hill* three years before. The book was plundered by Frank and Ravetch in order to make the character of Hud Bannon more complete. Clever and perceptive one-liners were taken from other male characters and given to Hud. His violence is

also less extreme in the movie, as is his treatment of his father. The familial relationships are altered in Ritt's film to provide the character of Hud with more influence. Also changed is the role of the Bannon's housekeeper, from the coloured woman, Halmea, to a white woman named Alma (Patricia Neal).

At the heart of Ritt's telling of the story is the relationship between Hud and his father, Homer 'Wildhorse' Bannon (Melvyn Douglas). Each of these characters is used to represent antithetical values. Homer regards Hud as a man with no principles, a ruthless opportunist who places self-gratification and easily-made profit before anything else. Hud sees his father as a fool who holds close to outdated values that, the younger man believes, have no place in the modern world. Each man, therefore, represents a different face of politicised Texas manhood. Both of them, however, despite their obvious personal failings, are in positions of power, or potential power, and that separates their plight from that of the minor characters in the film, most notably Alma and the itinerant cowhands. Coupled with these two characters is Lonnie (Brandon De Wilde), the son of Hud's dead brother, who is seeking his way in the world and respects aspects of both men.

In short, Homer is portrayed as a man of principle who believes in the law, and respects the right of the federal government to interfere in the running of his ranch, if it can be proven that this is for the public good. Homer's belief in the common good is strong enough to allow him to sacrifice his herd when they come down with foot and mouth disease (this includes the slaughter of two symbolic and prized longhorn steers which Homer personally shoots). His West Texas rancher worldview is tempered, therefore, by a thread of collectivism moulded in Populist and New Deal politics. Born in 1868, his life has centred on ranching, the patient nurturing of breeding stock, which, combined with a love of the land, is constructed to give the old

man an almost timeless quality. Homer's character is offered as the personification of the land, and his personal qualities reflect the hard work and dignity that it takes to make an honest and meaningful life from it. His masculinity is all wrapped up in the worth that his capacity for hard work engenders. Just as important a component of Homer's maleness is the power that he still wields on his ranch, despite a diminishing physical prowess. As the land as a working entity recedes, so too does Homer.

Homer does not serve as a model of the mythic Old West, such as the gunslinger and the outlaw, rather he can be seen as a model of the men that came after, who bought up thousands of cheap acres, and developed the land after it had been tamed. Homer is, in a sense, part of the myth of the new Old West. George Christian, in his positive review of Ritt's film in the *Houston Post*, pointed to the fact that the values of Hud historically precede those of Homer. He wrote:

Daddy is the squire, all principle, loving his lands, his cattle, his neighbors, needing a place where he can 'do for himself.' Hud is the maverick, impatient of restraint, contemptuous of rules, a frontiersman caught in the wrong time.¹²⁹

That Hud succeeds in his quest to wrest control of the ranch from Homer is a telling commentary on the condition of contemporary America. His masculinity is based on dominance. The cowboys are wary of him, his father, although strong enough mentally to oppose him, recognises the determination that threatens to take his land from him. Alma, under the twin disadvantage of being a woman and poor, fears Hud's socio-economic contempt and male sexual potency. Most critics have seen Hud as the outsider in this story, but, given Homer's belief in government, his reluctance to embrace organised religion and his resistance to the power of oil it is

reasonable to think that he has never been a conventional part of West Texas society. Oil has been pumping from the ground in that part of the country since Homer was a young man and his opposition to the economic free-for-all that boosted West Texas must have made him enemies.

The character of Hud, on the other hand, fits neatly with how the culture of post-war Texas was popularly perceived. He would never, for instance, have been convicted by a jury of his peers for his assault on his housekeeper, Alma. This is primarily because they shared the same belief in economic power, and protected this at the expense of all else. The idea that a young land-rich male ready to embrace the capitalist ethos should stumble over the fallen figure of Alma, a poor, female drifter with a checkered sexual history, is unthinkable. Alma knew this and escaped rather than take the opportunity to resort to the law. Homer does not understand the new values of 1950s Texas, and is, therefore, seen as a disposable, archaic, inconvenience both to Hud and a society that sees itself as having moved on. The selective economic prosperity that hit Texas in the 1940s had prompted a race to get rich that Hud wanted to join. Hud, like his father, upset the social applecart, but will be forgiven. The difference is that Hud, in his haste to abandon the old ways in favour of oil, will grease a few palms and line a few pockets, and, in the process, maintain the hypocrisy of the status quo. Gone then is the masculine archetype based on the strength of a man's character, in its place we are offered an updated version of the old Darwinian ethic that only the strong survive.

It was Ritt's intention in making *Hud* to show the ugly face of white Texas maleness and the popularity of the character he termed as 'this son of a bitch' came, allegedly, as a surprise to him.¹³⁰ Ritt, of course, misread the mood of the American cinema-going public in 1963 and the film, as well as Newman's character, became

enormously popular. In his review of the film, Rosenfield addressed the nature of white Texas maleness offered by Ritt and connected this manner of man to the society from which he sprang.¹³¹ His analysis of the film commenced with the almost obligatory statement that some in Texas were unhappy with this portrayal of their home state. He also expressed concern over the viability and universal appeal of the subject matter of 'cattle-raising in the Panhandle.'¹³² Despite this display of Dallas snobbery, he still endorsed the film in a manner worthy of the most overt Texas patriot. He wrote: 'The finished picture is superior and engrossing if not exactly the mightiest tribute to the mighty people of the mightiest state.'¹³³ His main criticisms of the film were technical, such as, for instance, his disapproval of the use of black and white to film a landscape which, he insisted, required 'the blue of the sky, the saffron of the ground and the prismatic purples of the mists.'¹³⁴ The main thrust of Rosenfield's critique, however, fell on what the characters represented in Texas terms. Hud he described as 'a Panhandle cut-up, wench, drinker and fist-slinger.' Homer was termed 'the patriarchal pioneer' and Rosenfield wrote of Lonnie that 'there are stars in his eyes since his elders got so large a piece of heaven for him.'¹³⁵ The script is also described in overtly Texas terms, as being 'full of the gruffest Texas rudeness almost too realistic for comfort.'¹³⁶

On the two crises faced by the Bannons – the foot and mouth disease and the dilemma whether they should utilise their land for oil – Rosenfield described the former as being 'full of trouble' and the latter as being 'full of hope'.¹³⁷ Clearly, unlike the stalwart character of Homer, the writer for the *Dallas Morning News* saw the presence of oil on one's land as being a cause for celebration and not the display of hand-wringing performed by the older Bannon.

All this assessment of *Hud* was within a broad Texas context and led to Rosenfield's conclusion that 'If you accept this story in terms of its characters it is a lye-soap opera. If you comprehend it in terms of what made Texas tick as loudly as a grandfather's clock, it becomes clear and informative.'¹³⁸ Rosenfield's analysis, therefore, was written with the state's social, economic and historical background firmly in mind. Aside from unease regarding the use of language and his optimistic prognosis on the presence of oil wealth, Rosenfield did not delve too deeply into 'what made Texas tick'. He was largely content to allow the stereotyping of Texas men to pass without critical comment. Indeed, he himself contributed to the construction of the notion of a oneness of personality for sections of the Texas male population. In a pre-release review of the film he wrote of the manner of masculinity that could be found in West Texas in the following way:

Not notably altruistic, the short-grass rancher is, nevertheless, a persistent individualist, adhering to a code ordained by pioneer times. There are just some things he won't do for money. Or, rather, he will do almost anything for money but only in his own way.¹³⁹

This convenient use of broad-based labels to describe sections of Texas manhood pandered to those who wished to contain the image of Texas maleness within a narrow conservative framework. It was also anathema to those in the liberal press who saw it as a prop to the state's ruling elite.

The filmic image of the contemporary Texas male was not confined to serious family-based drama such as *Giant*, *Written on the Wind* or *Hud*. The larger-than-life Texas millionaire had long been the subject of gentle lampooning and friendly

ribbing. Arguably, the most obvious cinematic manifestations of this satire were seen in Michael Gordon's *Pillow Talk* (1959) and Arthur Hiller's *The Wheeler Dealers* (1963). Send-ups of this nature can only be effective if the subject matter is truly engrained in the minds of the audience and, by the late 1950s and early 1960s, directors such as Hiller and Gordon were confident enough in the popular appeal of the image of the Texas millionaire to embark on these successful interpretations.

John Rosenfield, in his review of director Hiller's light comedy *The Wheeler Dealers* (1963), a film that attempted to bring a folksy charm to the world of Texas money speculators, felt it necessary to analyse at length the definition of the term 'Wheeler Dealer' before discussing the film. Rosenfield began:

Let it be understood that the compound profession, 'Wheeler Dealer' is not etymologically disrespectful. It is a candid description of the activities of men who used to call themselves oil speculators, railroaders, bankers who, like the 'Wheeler Dealer' puts his money into everything.¹⁴⁰

Rosenfield continued with this line of superficial, statement-of-fact analysis of the machinations of Texas money men for two paragraphs before he lightened the tone and laid out for his readers his perception of the transient existence of some sections of the male Texas rich. He explained:

1. Sunday – Oil is discovered on his farm.
2. Monday – He moves to Dallas.
3. Tuesday – He is elected President of the United Fund.
4. Wednesday – He is chosen Head of the Civic Opera.

5. Thursday – He is made President of the Dallas Symphony.
6. Friday – He is mentioned for Senator.
7. Saturday – Reports come that his acreage has a dry hole.
8. Sunday – He is back on the farm.¹⁴¹

If this constituted a rebuke to the standards of Texas society, it is mild indeed. Those who controlled Texas politically, economically and culturally were, of course, largely immune from such a social roller-coaster ride. Nowhere in his review, either in the flimsy, semi-serious and apologetic analysis of Texas-based economic anarchy, or in his use of humour to illuminate for his readers one of the myths of economic opportunity, did Rosenfield attempted to shed any light on the Texas economic reality.

Unsurprisingly, given the space taken up by his attempts at social scrutiny, there is little actual analysis of the film in Rosenfield's review other than his proud emphasis on the Texas flavour of the cast featuring Chill Wills, Ed Harris and Charlie Watts, who, Rosenfield claimed, were all Texas natives. It could be argued that Rosenfield, as his city's 'cultural arbiter' assessed his role in Texas as more than an appraiser of lightweight Hollywood comedies and, therefore, set out in this review to show, in as entertaining a way as possible, that his finger was on the pulse of Texas society. Whatever the reason, his personal need to over-analyse the economic reality that was able to bring the occasional poor farmer close to the doors of power in the state, was not shared by his fellow reviewers in the Establishment papers.

The Wheeler Dealers opened in Texas cities in the week that John F. Kennedy was murdered in Dallas, an event that caused some in the Texas press to look inward in an attempt to understand why the assassination had happened in their home state.

Rosenfield's lengthy explanation of the workings of Texas capitalism is, arguably, evidence that, prior to the killing of Kennedy, some journalists working for the Establishment press were interested, to some degree, in critical self-analysis. There is, however, no discernible difference in tone from reviewers, like Rosenfield, who reported prior to the shooting, to those who reviewed the film in its aftermath.

John Bustin, in his review in the *Austin American-Statesman* a week after the assassination, wrote that the film was 'A free-wheeling story about a folksy but financially fast-shooting Texan.'¹⁴² Bustin's choice of language, to a detached latter-day observer, seems, at best, inappropriate. An incredibly fast-shooting Texan, Lee Harvey Oswald, had just caused one of the most dramatic events in American twentieth-century history and most of America and the world was still reeling from shock. Taken in a 1963 Texas context, the insensitivity of the reviewer serves as a reminder that not all sections of Texas society displayed grief over Kennedy's killing. This is not to suggest that Bustin was ambiguous about the event, but it could point to the fact that, like many other figures in the Texas Establishment, he absolved the state and its 'fast-shooting' male-dominated culture of any blame and wished to put the incident behind him. As we have seen, it was not common for cultural commentators working for the conservative press to pack their reviews of Texas-based films with meaningful social comment. However, even by these standards, and given the enormity of the events in Dallas, Bustin's language still seems badly chosen.

In reality, most reviewers enjoyed and approved of the manner in which Hiller approached this portrayal of Texas maleness. The lead character, Henry Tyroon (James Garner), is an Eastern financial speculator pretending to be a Texan. Aided by three authentic Texas millionaires, Ray Jay (Phil Harris), R. Jay (Chill Wills) and J. R. (Charles Watts), his motivation for this deception is based on the popular idea, one

confirmed by Rosenfield's review, that Texas is the home of the 'wheeler dealer.' Such men, according to the theme song, are 'high falutin', local yokels, diamonds in the rough.'¹⁴³ The deception perpetrated by Garner's character was similar to that played out by Rock Hudson's Rex Stetson in Michael Gordon's earlier comedy, *Pillow Talk* (1959), the difference being that Stetson employed his Texas pretence for short-term sexual conquest, whereas Tyroon played the game essentially for financial profit.

In the main, reviewers referred primarily to the manner of manhood portrayed by Garner and what this represented in terms of a Texas male image. The character was described enthusiastically in the *San Antonio Express* as 'a legendary sort of present-day Texas millionaire, the kind who likes to drive his Cadillac around his living room.'¹⁴⁴ George Christian in the *Houston Post* seems to have missed the point of the scam and delighted in the one-upmanship perpetrated by 'Texan' Tyroon on New Yorkers. 'Our man,' he wrote of Garner's character, 'walks tall in Manhattan.'¹⁴⁵ Elston Brooks in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* focuses on the three Texas money men and proclaims:

Texas, our Texas – you are being served up in Alaska-sized portions on show row screens here. Tex, you ain't had such wide-screen treatment since Edna Ferber gave you the 'wild swing' treatment in *Giant*.¹⁴⁶

The nature of these reviews was in proportion to the lack of seriousness of the film. Only Rosenfield found it necessary to look beyond the image of Texas and its manhood as offered by Hiller and pontificate on the relevance of the depiction. Texas chauvinism shone through in the other reviews but profound analysis was, arguably,

inappropriate in the light of Kennedy's death and, therefore, understandably absent. The presence of Texas pride in the reviews, however, indicates that critics were not in principle against the use of the Texas male character in such lightweight roles and, as we shall discuss later, this would not be the case when the character of the Texas male in American popular culture underwent a radical overhaul.

It could be argued that there was a marked change in attitude between the conservative press's reviews of *Written on the Wind* and *Giant* in 1956 and their critiques of *Hud* and *The Wheeler Dealers* in 1963. Social context was ignored in *Written on the Wind* and was moulded to best suit the ruling elite in the reviews of *Giant*. Rosenfield's laborious and unnecessary explanation of the workings of Texas's stock market gamblers in his review of Hiller's movie indicates a shift in his cultural priorities. Similarly, his acknowledgment that *Hud* informs the audience of the core values of the Texas past is evidence that even writers under the wing of the Texas Establishment were increasingly obliged to deal with the difficult questions being posed by socially-aware and, as we shall discover, essentially anti-Texas filmmakers.

Conclusion

When dealing with the face of white Texas maleness offered in the home-bred written word, the attitude of LonTinkle, the most prominent Texas literary critic of his age, was to elevate, beyond the bounds of reason, the artistic value of the work. Tinkle's motivation was to establish his home state as a genuine source of literary talent. All other aspects of the work, including the thematic context of white Texas masculinity, were forgotten in his quest to advance the cause of Texas literature. It

was equally important to Tinkle that the legacy of Texas history and the glory of Texas historical manhood be preserved and cherished. All of this was done under the shadow and authority of the Texas ruling elite. Tinkle's brand of Texas chauvinism and aesthetic elitism ideally suited the demands of his paymasters in the Texas Establishment. ✓

Journalists such as John Rosenfield, whose role it was to offer opinions on film, shied clear from acknowledging the potential socio-political impact of the stereotyped male characterisation of white Texas maleness. His role, and that of his colleagues, was to nurture and protect the series of supremacist myths that surrounded white Texas masculinity. This was mostly achieved by ignoring any suggestion of a relationship between character and social reality. Compared with the reviewers in the *Texas Observer*, who believed that those who controlled Texas politically and economically selfishly utilised the standard image of white Texas maleness, the attitude of the journalists on the conservative press was unquestioning of the societal role of the Texas male myth. Occasionally, the obvious social, cultural, socio-economic or historical influence that went into constructing a particular Texas male character would be discussed in the conservative press. There was, however, none of the frantic politically-motivated breast-beating that accompanied this manner of recognition in the liberal press. The reason for this difference was that the image of white Texas manhood that was engrained in the minds of the American reading and cinema-going public complemented the rule of the conservative ruling elite. In short, conservative cultural observers had no axe to grind with the standard image and their failure to engage with the more difficult, Texas-based issues was a reflection of their willing acquiescence in the hegemony of the state's ruling elite.

¹ Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics*, p. 17.

² *The Texas Observer*, 21 April 1962.

³ Bob Porter, 'Newspapering in Dallas in the 1960s,' *Legacies: A History Journal for Dallas and North Central Texas*, Vol. 9 (Spring 1997), No. 1, pp. 51-7. Porter also pointed to the reliance of the *News* on the 'upper-end retail advertising' provided by key Dallas businesses such as Neiman-Marcus.

⁴ C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 166. Mills pointed to two Texas millionaires in particular, Hugh Roy Cullen and H. L. Hunt. For further evidence of their societal involvement see *New York Times*, 21 November 1952 and 8 March 1953 and the *Washington Post*, 15-19 February 1954.

⁵ Robert Engler, *The Politics of Oil: The Study of Private Power and Democratic Directions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 349-50.

⁶ All reference from Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics*, pp. 10, 104 and 125-30 respectively.

⁷ K. E. Hendrickson, et al., *Profiles in Power: Twentieth Century Texans in Washington* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), pp. 63-64.

⁸ *The Texas Observer*, 12 December 1956.

⁹ *The Dallas Morning News*, 2 July 1941.

¹⁰ *The Dallas Morning News*, 3 April 1942.

¹¹ *The Dallas Morning News*, 15 August 1941.

¹² *The Dallas Morning News* editorial of 3 October 1957 stated that: 'Dallas leaders of both the white and colored parents most concerned in integration should take quiet steps to arrive at a plan which can reasonably be made the basis of a consent decree.' This was in stark contrast to the stated position of the *News* previously. In 1953, for example, the *News* published a defence of segregation from a 'Negro spokesman', Sidney Phillips of Virginia, which the paper described as being 'bold and brave'. *Dallas Morning News*, 9 July 1953.

¹³ *The Austin American*, 30 April 1954.

¹⁴ Harte's priority was always the efficient running of his business. Anything that hampered the profit-making process was to be opposed. It was for this reason that his newspaper outlets, especially the *San Angelo Standard-Times*, had come out strongly against the Ku Klux Klan in 1923.

¹⁵ Haley's view of Harte, as well as Harte's priorities with regard to the image of Texas maleness, can be found in Modisett, *J. Evetts Haley: A True Legend*, pp. 79-81.

¹⁶ Quote from William J. Hooten, *Fifty Two Years a Newsman* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1974), p. 8.

¹⁷ Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics*, p. 10.

¹⁸ Paul Boller, 'The Dallas Morning News and Russia', *The Southwestern Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 41 (March 1961), No. 4, pp. 435-49.

¹⁹ Ramon Adams, *Wayne Gard: Historian of the West* (Austin: Steck-Vaughn Company, 1970), p. 1.

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- ²⁰ *The Dallas Morning News*, 26 July 1936.
- ²¹ Wayne Gard, *The Great Buffalo Hunt* (New York: Knopf, 1959), p. v.
- ²² *The Texas Spectator*, 27 January 1947.
- ²³ *The Dallas Morning News*, 1 September 1961.
- ²⁴ *The Dallas Morning News*, 16 September 1956.
- ²⁵ Patricia Evridge Hill in *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), p. 126 stated: 'The insular nature of the new elite had significant effects on public life in the decades after the Second World War. The founders of the Citizens Council were not connoisseurs, and the city's veteran arts enthusiasts found the new elite much less eager . . . to support cultural institutions.'
- ²⁶ Garland Cullum, 'The Rosenfield Legend,' *Southwest Review* (August 1947), p. 382.
- ²⁷ *The Dallas Morning News*, 2 January 1955.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Jack Nelson and Gene Roberts, Jr., *The Censors and the Schools*, p. 127.
- ³⁰ *The Dallas Morning News*, 3 September 1961.
- ³¹ *The Dallas Morning News*, 10 September 1961.
- ³² *The Texas Observer*, 27 October 1961.
- ³³ *The Dallas Morning News*, 8 September 1952.
- ³⁴ *The Dallas Morning News*, 7 December 1952.
- ³⁵ Bernard Dorrity, 'Let's Secede From Texas,' *Esquire* (April 1953).
- ³⁶ *The Daily Texan*, 10 March 1953.
- ³⁷ *The Dallas Morning News*, 22 March 1953.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ *The Austin American Statesman*, 31 October 1959.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Tinkle's rant against Wellman appeared in the *Dallas Morning News* of 5 October 1952.
- ⁴² *The Dallas Morning News*, 10 November 1961.
- ⁴³ Bainbridge, *The Super Americans*, p. 6.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 295.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 181.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 322.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid, pp. 321-22.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 322.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 218.

⁵⁰ *The Dallas Morning News*, 10 November 1961.

⁵¹ *The Dallas Morning News*, 5 October 1952.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ *The Dallas Morning News*, 23 November 1952.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ *The Dallas Morning News*, 5 October 1952.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ *The Dallas Morning News*, 15 March 1959.

⁵⁸ *The Dallas Morning News*, 17 December 1961.

⁵⁹ Relevant articles include: Rebecca Smith Lee, 'News Annual Selective Roundup of Texas Prose Books of 1949,' *Dallas Morning News*, 18 December 1949; Bard Lindeman, 'Few Books by Texans, But Quality is High,' *The Amarillo Sunday News-Globe*, 3 January 1954.

⁶⁰ *The Dallas Times-Herald*, 9 November 1947.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² *The Dallas Morning News*, 28 May 1961.

⁶³ Tinkle wrote Dobie's glowing biography, *An American Original* (1978). He also described Lea as 'rugged and very Texan' and his novel *The Wonderful Country* as 'a wonderful story about a wonderful country.' *Dallas Morning News*, 23 November 1952. Tinkle's opinion of Webb is found in the abovementioned review of Katherine Wheatley's work, *Dallas Morning News*, 17 September 1956.

⁶⁴ Lon Tinkle, *13 Days to Glory: The Siege of the Alamo* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958), p. 9.

⁶⁵ See Tom Pilkington, *State of Mind: Texas Literature and Culture* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998), p. 83.

⁶⁶ Tinkle was hired by John Wayne to act as a technical consultant in the making of Wayne's *The Alamo* (1960). However, when both Wayne and scriptwriter James Edward Grant ignored his advice, Tinkle insisted that his name be removed from the credits.

⁶⁷ Don Graham, *Cowboys and Cadillacs*, p. 9.

⁶⁸ Gipson's novel *The Home Place* (New York: Harper, 1950) was made as *The Return of the Texan* (1952), starring Dale Robertson and Walter Brennan. The other adaptations retained their titles. They were: *Old Yeller* (1957), starring Fess Parker; *Hound Dog Man* (1959), starring Fabian and Stuart Whitman; and *Savage Sam* (1962), starring Brian Keith.

⁶⁹ Faulk hosted radio shows for CBS and WCBS from 1946 to 1957 when he was blacklisted for alleged Communist sympathies.

⁷⁰ One such idea, which was put to Walt Disney, was a television show called the *True West*. Gipson suggested that J. Frank Dobie who, he said, 'had a very photographic face,' and 'my old friend' Walter

Prescott Webb should feature. Fred Gipson to Walt Disney, 6 May 1957. The source here is the Gipson Correspondence from the Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas. [Henceforth cited as GC. HRC].

⁷¹ Fred Gipson to Walt Disney, 16 August 1962, GC. HRC.

⁷² Bill Anderson (Walt Disney Productions) to Fred Gipson, 21 August 1962, GC. HRC.

⁷³ Letter, Fred Gipson to Mr Lamar R. Stanley of Virginia, 11 December 1962, GC. HRC.

⁷⁴ *The San Antonio Express*, 5 January 1916.

⁷⁵ Frank Thompson, *Alamo Movies* (Plano: Republic of Texas Press, 1991), p. 26.

⁷⁶ Donald Clark and Christopher Anderson, *John Wayne's the Alamo: the Making of John Wayne's 1960 Epic Film* (Hillsdale: Midwest Publishing, 1994), p. 106.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁷⁸ Gary Wills, *John Wayne's America: The Politics of Celebrity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997). Wills wrote that Wayne's desire to make this film 'was the closest Wayne came to having a real religion.' p. 204.

⁷⁹ John Wayne to President Lyndon Johnson, 28 December 1965, in Lawrence H. Suid, ed., *Film and Propaganda in America: A Documentary History, Volume 4: 1945 and After* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), Document 109, p. 390.

⁸⁰ Gary Wills, *John Wayne's America*, p. 216

⁸¹ For an in-depth assessment of the Texas Establishment's influence in the making of the film see Clark and Anderson, *John Wayne's The Alamo*.

⁸² *Life*, July 4 1960.

⁸³ Clark and Anderson, *John Wayne's The Alamo*, p. 132.

⁸⁴ *San Antonio Light*, 12 December 1959.

⁸⁵ Davy Crockett was not a native-born Texan. Indeed, none of those white men who died at the Alamo were born in Texas, but their deaths on Texas soil and the sacrifice they are credited with making in order to achieve Texas independence places them in the top rank of Texas male iconography.

⁸⁶ Quote from the film *The Alamo* (1960), taken from Wills, *John Wayne's America*, p. 213.

⁸⁷ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 26 October 1960.

⁸⁸ *Houston Post*, 27 October 1960.

⁸⁹ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 26 October 1960.

⁹⁰ *Dallas Morning News*, 26 October 1960.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Houston Post*, 27 October 1960

⁹⁴ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 26 October 1960.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Cormac McCarthy, *All The Pretty Horses* (London: Pan Books, 1994); O. Henry, 'Caballero's Way' in *Heart of the West* (New York: The McClure Company, 1907).

⁹⁶ See, for instance, Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969) and Wim Wenders' *Paris, Texas* (1985).

⁹⁷ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 30 October 1959.

⁹⁸ *Dallas Morning News*, 3 December 1959.

⁹⁹ Don Graham, *Cowboys and Cadillacs*, p. 127.

¹⁰⁰ *Dallas Morning News*, 3 December 1959.

¹⁰¹ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 30 October 1959.

¹⁰² Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 185.

¹⁰³ Gary Wills, *John Wayne's America*, p. 347.

¹⁰⁴ For an idea of Hawks' view of *High Noon*, see Todd McCarthy, *Howard Hawks: The Grey Fox of Hollywood* (New York: Grove Press, 1997), pp. 548-49.

¹⁰⁵ *The Houston Post*, 27 March 1959.

¹⁰⁶ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 27 March 1959.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Dallas Morning News*, 26 March 1959; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 27 March 1959.

¹¹¹ *Dallas Morning News*, 26 March 1959.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *The Dallas Morning News*, 1 January 1957.

¹¹⁴ *The Houston Post*, 13 January 1957; *Austin American-Statesman*, 6 January 1957.

¹¹⁵ *Austin-American Statesman*, 15 November 1956.

¹¹⁶ Edna Ferber, *Giant* (New York: Perennial, 2000, first published 1952), pp. 36-45.

¹¹⁷ *Dallas Morning News*, 11 November 1956.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

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- ¹²¹ Rosenfield was described in this way in an article in *Newsweek* entitled 'Giant of the Southwest,' 21 March 1949.
- ¹²² *Dallas Morning News*, 11 November 1956.
- ¹²³ Ibid.
- ¹²⁴ Ibid.
- ¹²⁵ Ibid.
- ¹²⁶ The *Dallas Morning News*, 30 April 1961.
- ¹²⁷ Davidson, *Race and Class in Texas Politics*, p. 88.
- ¹²⁸ Edna Ferber, *Giant*, Chapter 29.
- ¹²⁹ *The Houston Post*, 30 May 1963.
- ¹³⁰ Carlton Jackson, *Picking Up the Tab: The Life and Movies of Martin Ritt* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1994), p. 74. Paul Newman also expressed surprise at the popularity of the character of Hud Bannon. In a 1991 interview he said: 'We fucked up. We laughed about this. We thought that the fact that he [Hud] was basically rotten at the core would be the distinguishable feature. What we didn't realise was that all the other things . . . those macho things, he wore his pants right, he was a womanizer . . . overwhelmed that single flaw and he came away a folk hero.' Ibid, p. 71.
- ¹³¹ *Dallas Morning News*, 30 May 1963.
- ¹³² Ibid.
- ¹³³ Ibid.
- ¹³⁴ Ibid.
- ¹³⁵ Ibid.
- ¹³⁶ Ibid.
- ¹³⁷ Ibid.
- ¹³⁸ Ibid.
- ¹³⁹ *The Dallas Morning News*, 20 April 1963.
- ¹⁴⁰ *The Dallas Morning News*, 17 November 1963.
- ¹⁴¹ Ibid.
- ¹⁴² *The Austin American Statesman*, 30 November 1963.
- ¹⁴³ *The Wheeler Dealers* theme song was performed by the New Christy Minstrels.
- ¹⁴⁴ *The San Antonio Express*, 21 November 1963.
- ¹⁴⁵ *The Houston Post*, 22 November 1963.
- ¹⁴⁶ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 22 November 1963.

4. The Texas Liberal Press and the Image of White Texas Masculinity, 1938-1963.

It is not surprising that those Texans who sought to represent the views and concerns of the powerless in Texas society should resent the domination of a popular masculine image that centred on the characteristics most commonly associated with the powerful. Within the three outlets for Texas political liberalism that will be examined here, each, to varying degrees, displayed an understanding of the cultural, social and political relevance of the Texas male image. The resentment toward the image that existed in the Texas liberal press, especially when it became a significant issue in the mid-1950s, was primarily directed at those who benefited from the image in the Texas business and political elites. However, bitterness was also aimed at those in the media, literature and the entertainment industries who were seen as the promoters of the image.

To liberal Texans, the popular image of Texas and its manhood increasingly became an irritant. The appropriation of the image was not soothed by the appearance of another nationally-recognised male stereotype, the oil millionaire, which came to rival the cowboy/rancher in Texas male iconography. In the immediate post-World War II period, representatives of this small but highly visual section of the Texas population were feted by the nation's journalists and written about in countless magazine articles. The crass materialism of the 'big rich' gave the concept of white Texas maleness a distinctly political feel. Millionaires, of course, were closely identified with the spirit of capitalist entrepreneurship, which itself fitted neatly with the ideas and principles of the conservative political establishment. Therefore, the image of white Texas masculinity that these men personified was a direct link

between the popular image of the state's maleness and those men who ran the state politically and economically.¹

For many social commentators of a liberal bent, the image itself was pure hokum. For others, the use of the Texas male image by the Texas Establishment represented part of an insidious strategy by which the ruling elite sought to promote itself, and the values they believed they represented, as the heart of Texas culture. The one positive aspect of the image for Texas liberals lay in their belief that it was crass, superficial and negative. This lent credence to their view that Texas conservatism was essentially a philistine political creed, which encouraged a caricatured self-interested vision of the state at the expense of a more profound and realistic assessment. Constructing much of the image as inane did not, however, act to solve or soothe, in the eyes of the Texas liberal press, the impact on Texas society of the Texas Establishment. It was one thing to feel culturally and intellectually superior to the ruling elite; it was, however, quite another constantly to be on the receiving end of Establishment influence. This impotence on the part of the liberal press accounts, to some degree, for its occasional reluctance to engage both with the phenomenon itself and the appropriation of the Texas male image by the most powerful forces in the state.

The lack of a significant liberal voice in Texas, one that could articulate and organise opposition to the ruling group, was a serious issue for those on the left. Their concern led to a number of disparate attempts to create a newspaper that adequately expressed the views of those who rejected the dominance of the Establishment. Three newspapers would in the end stand out in their opposition to the ruling elite. These were the *Emancipator* (1938-1953), *The Texas Spectator* (1945-1948) and *The Texas Observer* (1953-to the present). All of these newspapers were

produced outside of Dallas, the former in San Antonio and the other two in Austin.

The significance of this lies in the fact that, by the late-1930s, Dallas was the home ground of the Texas Establishment. It was certainly the undisputed business centre of Texas and was aspiring to be the sole cultural capital of the state. The main media organ of the Texas ruling elite, *The Dallas Morning News*, was extremely influential in the city. Therefore, being at a distance from this aggressive, capitalistic cultural pressure allowed these small voices of liberal dissent to express their views in relative freedom.² By examining each of these newspapers individually, the importance of white Texas maleness as a factor in the promotion of their political aims will become clear.

It is not the influence of these newspapers' impact on Texas culture that is being discussed here. If that were the case, the discussion, especially in the case of the *Emancipator* and the *Spectator*, would be brief and insubstantial. It is, rather, the opportunity that these newspapers offer, by their very presence and diversity, to look at a perception of the image of white Texas maleness that differed from the norm. This alternative and essentially cynical view of the image of the state provides a makeweight and vital point of contrast to the view expressed in the dominant conservative press.

The Emancipator

The *Emancipator*, the brainchild of Virginian John Cowper Granbery and his wife May, represented a different point of political resistance from either the *Spectator* or the *Observer*. The *Emancipator* was conceived in the 1930s, a decade earlier than the two other papers and this fact goes a long way toward explaining the differences in

attitude toward the image of Texas maleness. Granbery was a Christian socialist who taught history at Texas Technological College from 1925 until he was dismissed in 1932 for 'subversive' activities. He taught sociology at Southwestern University from 1935 to 1938, until he was again forced to resign in similar circumstances.³ The first edition of the monthly *Emancipator* was published in San Antonio in September 1938. The *Emancipator* also took a highbrow attitude to culture, commenting mainly on literature and treating the impact of the male image in popular culture as, for the most part, incidental and barely worthy of serious comment. This did not, however, mean that the *Emancipator* was immune to the influence of the image or reluctant to use the image of white Texas manhood when it felt the need to do so. The usefulness of the *Emancipator* for the purpose of this thesis stems from its awareness of the political potential of language and its willingness to use the undoubted strengths of historical Texas maleness for its own political purposes. The *Emancipator* embraced the hyperbole surrounding Texas manhood as its own. This, in itself, was unusual for a left-of-centre newspaper and was to become even rarer in the 1950s.

The main thrust of the newspaper was to challenge the religious, socio-economic, racial and political dominance of the conservative ruling elite. It is important in the context of this thesis to understand that, despite his liberal radicalism and the concern of his newspaper for the place of women in society, Granbery lived in a social and cultural environment that was undoubtedly dominated by men and the concerns of men. It was almost inevitable, therefore, that his disaffection with this society was articulated in a manner that reflected the dominance of men in this society. As will become evident, even items in the *Emancipator* which were written by women were shaped to fit the prevailing male hegemony. Although the main concentration in its pages was on Texas, the *Emancipator* was not inhibited by the constraints of regional

politics. The front page of the first issue led with an article on how the aims of Christianity are compromised by capitalism. Part of that article, by H. M. Ratcliff, a Methodist preacher from Austin, read:

This capitalistic system is characterised by self-interest, competition, and the profit motive, while Christianity is essentially unselfish, cooperative, and controlled by the service motive.⁴

The initial issue also contained endorsements from the newspaper's core supporters in the Labour Movement and from P. M. Burroughs of the Austin Trades Council, and greetings from the Texas Agricultural Association. Articles on the liberal San Antonio politician Maury Maverick and on the dire economic condition of the South were also included. May Granbery offered a monthly column that reflected her perspective on women's issues. The tone and content of the inaugural issue, indeed, gives a reasonable representation of what the *Emancipator* wished to offer its readership.

Although Granbery pushed a strong Southern line, his pride in his Anglo-Scottish male heritage never strayed over the boundary into racism. In two highly ironic articles from 1944 entitled 'White Supremacy: A Defence of the White Race' and 'We Naughty Southerners,' he wrote of his racial position as an avid Southerner, the substance of which is contained within his comment that: 'I am proud of my race, though, to tell the truth, I had not given the matter much thought until lately, when my race is under attack.' The source of this attack, it turns out, are those Southern leaders 'who do not believe that the white race is able to hold its own in free competition with

the Negro except by giving white people artificial and legal advantages.’⁵ A month later he felt the need to reiterate this position and wrote:

To say that I am ashamed of the shortcomings of the South would be to put it mildly, but I am tired of being pushed around . . . The ignorant, un-American demagogues who pretend to speak for the South do not really represent us . . . If there are liberals in the South why don’t they do something? All I now ask is that we be recognized as existing . . . we are the real South, the South that is decent, self-respecting, American, intelligent, forward looking.⁶

Granbery’s positive and progressive attitude to his white Southern tradition was typical of his constant need to present the men of the South, and of Texas, in a positive and optimistic light. When he found fault, it was invariably within the ranks of the ruling male-dominated political elite and their associates in the Texas press. For example, during the ‘Rainey Controversy’ at the University of Texas in the mid-1940s, the *Emancipator* gave many column inches to those who supported Rainey, especially J. Frank Dobie.⁷

Because the *Emancipator* did not deal with popular culture, its perspective on the image of Texas men in film and literature cannot be gauged. One reason for this is that Texas-based cinema in the 1930s and 1940s was more likely to use a Texas theme than to deal with issues that were Texas-specific. It was not until the 1950s, with a few notable exceptions, that films began to look closely at the nature of contemporary Texas society.⁸ It was difficult, however, for any Texas newspaper in the 1930s to ignore the frontier parlance that dominated the written word in Texas. Therefore, the *Emancipator* used vernacular common among Texas writers, social

commentators and politicians of the period in order, it could be argued, to try to wrest the language from the conservatives.

From this use of language it is possible to determine the awareness and reaction of Granbery and his staff to the popular image of Texas men. For example, an article on Leroy Allen, a professor of economics and bible and religious education at Southwestern College, was entitled, 'Leroy Allen: Pioneer.' The profile of Dr. Allen took a different perspective from the contemporary profiles of 'pioneers' that were commonplace in Texas newspapers and magazines. Nowhere in the full-page article are there testimonies to Allen's physique, courage, individualism or fortitude. Instead, this 'pioneer', known, according to the article, among his local chamber of commerce as 'the Beloved Bolshevist', is marked by his 'sympathetic and helpful attitude toward students' and his 'humorous attacks upon the evils of the present social order'.⁹

In the same vein, a poem dedicated to the radical poet and critic Ralph Cheyney in the October 1941 issue of the *Emancipator* was entitled, 'Frontiersman of the Soul' and contained the following lines:

He stood as did our sires remote and far
 Who raised the banner of the brave Lone Star,
 Symbol of all who dare to rise and speak
 For the besieged battalions of the meek.
 . . . It means that all the splendor that you shed
 Is one with Texas and her glorious dead.¹⁰

Written by Lilith Lorraine, the poem crudely attempted to associate the Texas fight for freedom and the popular heroes which that struggle created with the contemporaneous, marginalised leftist struggle on behalf of the 'meek'. This use of language, sentiment and specific historical reference, all in ways usually associated with the cause of conservatism, indicates that the *Emancipator* was aware of the benefits of harnessing a political cause to the standard male image of the state. This awareness of the power of the Texas male image suggests that the newspaper was not content to allow the conservatives to have a monopoly on the use of patriotic Texas glory.

Language that was common in Texas writing of that period was also used in the paper's description of politicians and public figures of whom it approved. The *Emancipator* feature in 1939 on Homer Price Rainey, who had recently been chosen as president of the University of Texas, expressed a degree of Texas jingoism and belief in the qualities of the state's men that would not have been out of place in the work of ultra-conservative J. Evetts Haley. Portions of the article by Odie Minatra read as follows:

A tall, bald and blondish Texan . . . has been chosen President of the South's greatest University . . . Upon what great meat has this young Texan fed? . . . The son of a tenant farmer, only hardships illumined his path . . . he walks with the great but holds all men in brotherhood. Affable, angular, and able, in him is – Power.¹¹

The same writer, in an equally glowing tribute to the conservative governor, Coke Stevenson, again used this unashamed hyperbole. Given the political bent of the

Emancipator, it is surprising that their assessment of Stevenson, albeit early in his governorship when, perhaps, his conservatism was less obvious, is so flattering.¹²

The following gives a flavour of Minatra's eulogy to Stevenson:

Stevenson, able and earthy, booted and bronzed, typifies Texas. From cow country to cotton lands; Panhandle to pine hills; citrus groves to oil fields, Texans salute this Governor on Horseback.¹³

It was not unusual to find this kind of Texas overkill in early copies of the *Emancipator*. The comment on Stevenson set out to associate a newly-elected Establishment politician (whom the newspaper optimistically and naively believed could offer the kind of political policies of which they approved) with the staple virtues of white Texas maleness. Stevenson also followed in the wake of 'Pappy' O'Daniel and so many Texas liberals embraced the new governor at first simply as relief from the draconian conservatism of his predecessor. Further, the Texas press of the time welcomed Stevenson to office as a native-born Texan, as opposed to the outsider O'Daniel, and the chauvinistic tone of the *Emancipator* article was also reflected in the Establishment press.¹⁴

As the 1940s continued, however, and the socio-political influence of the Texas male image became a talking point, Cranberry felt the need to justify the fact that this kind of Texas emphasis appeared regularly in the newspaper. An article in the *Emancipator* in the August 1946 issue entitled 'Texas Braggadocio' laid out Granbery's view of the Texas male image. Granbery's style of writing often involved introducing a subject casually by referring to a conversation he may have overheard,

an incident he may have witnessed or, in this case, the comment of a friend. He wrote:

A good friend is disturbed by the wild-west psychology and braggadocio of Texas, and thinks that there is no hope for the State's taking a place of leadership among Southern States until it gets over this malady and develops a social conscience.

Granbery went on to assess the cultural impact of this phenomenon and attempted to place it in some sort of socio-political context. He continued:

But we are inclined to think that our literal-minded friend takes the matter too seriously. We do not blame him for failing to discover the humor, but it might help if he could recognize that these ridiculous exaggerations about the size of Texas and the achievements of Texans are meant to be funny . . . We have a fairly large acquaintance throughout the state, and do not know a single instance in which an intelligent and reasonably liberal Texan has been harmfully affected by this frailty that disturbs our friend.

He concluded in an optimistic manner:

We are more painfully aware of our lack of a social conscience and other bad traits than anyone outside the state can be, and as long as we are working for something better, there ought to be hope for us. In the meantime, we like that which is colourful, and ask to be indulged in a little playful strutting.¹⁵

The very fact that the *Emancipator* felt the need to include this piece is a good indication that the image of Texas and its men was becoming an issue in the state's political life. The image of Texas and the chauvinistic arrogance of its male populace were not, however, of great concern to Granbery. His priority remained social change and he failed to see how the 'playful strutting' of some Texans could hinder that.

He did, however, see fit to use the image of Texas maleness in an attempt to shame the men of the state into greater political realism. In an article entitled 'Texas Communists,' Granbery related the story of Ruth Koenig and Emma Tenayuca, two young female members of the Communist Party of Texas. Against a background of threatened violence and intimidation, these two young women spoke regularly at meetings in Texas in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The *Emancipator* article referred to two such occasions, one in the State Legislature in Austin and the other in the Municipal Auditorium in San Antonio, where the women spoke of their support for Communism and the Texas Labour Movement. Granbery expressed astonishment at the fact 'that big, brave Texans should tremble and become hysterical before these quiet Communist girls.'¹⁶ His purpose, clearly, was to contrast the standard image of dignified and courageous Texas maleness, which at least mythically was more used to fighting Indians on the plains or Mexicans at the Alamo, against the kind of frenzied and distasteful bullying of two young, politically-committed women. Granbery would not have used the image and reputation of Texas men in this way if he had not been sure that the status of the image would ensure that his point was driven home.

Although aware of the negative connotations of the male Texas image, the *Emancipator* did not take its use by the Establishment particularly seriously. That task was left to other journalistic outlets of Texas liberalism.

The Texas Spectator

In a letter to the millionaire oilman J. R. Parten in 1946, J. Frank Dobie wrote:

You are one of the very few men with money in this state who realizes the necessity for liberal minds . . . I think also that you believe that some sort of magazine or newspaper is necessary for the expression of liberal ideas. I don't see how a liberal party can hold together without some sort of organ.¹⁷

Dobie was expressing the desire of Texas liberals that their newspaper, the short-lived *Texas Spectator*, be given the necessary financial support to keep it solvent. The *Spectator* was an attempt by disaffected Texas liberals, appalled by the iron grip of Texas business on the political process, racial problems and the treatment meted out to organised labour, the philistine anti-intellectual happenings at the University of Texas and the conservative emphasis of the majority of the Texas press, to offer an outlet to the liberal viewpoint.

Walter Prescott Webb also worked to keep the *Spectator* afloat. In a letter to his friend Roy Bedichek, he outlined his reasons for supporting the paper:

I spent last evening with Harold Young, secretary to Henry Wallace, and with the editors of the *Spectator*. The boys are getting to the end of their financial rope, and need such aid as may be forthcoming. From a purely abstract point of view, there should be room in Texas for one free, liberal paper. In addition to this they are giving a high type of journalistic reporting. It seems that a liberal

must always have the help of a conservative in carrying out his liberal ideas.¹⁸

Webb's letter, as with Dobie's, also points to the irony of the fact that the only way a liberal newspaper in Texas could survive was by ingratiating itself with its political opponents. Despite the dangers involved in this incongruity, the *Spectator* sought, for the three years of its existence, to upset the Texas Establishment in every way possible.

For example, on the standard of intellectual thought among the conservative political appointees on the Board of Regents at the University of Texas, the *Spectator* chose to report the following:

In trying to prevent the funding of a professor's project to trace the concept of human dignity from Bacon to Locke, U. T. regent Orville Bullington declared, 'I don't think anybody'll spend \$3 to read about Bacon and Locke.'¹⁹

The newspaper also supported the attempt by a Negro student, Heman Sweatt of Houston, to gain entry to the University and roundly criticised another regent, Dr. Frank Strickland, for his insistence that during the time of Homer Rainey the University had been 'too interested in interracial relations and in education for Negroes.'²⁰

The *Spectator* was also consumed by its disregard for the men who controlled the conservative Texas press and regularly featured articles on its perception of the corruption involved in the collusion between big business and the newspaper industry. One such stated:

The daily newspapers of Texas are even more backward in their views than most of the politicians. They are even less ready than politicians to let the subscribers or the voters know what is going on around them.²¹

Article after article railed against the political position taken by Hearst's *San Antonio Light*, or the *Houston Post*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Austin American* and the *Dallas Morning News*.²²

Within this clearly-defined political standpoint, the *Spectator's* cultural view of Texas was equally well-defined. The newspaper understood and rejected the brazen political use of the Texas male image by those in the state who wielded economic and political power. The following extract made this clear and also indicted the Texas press in general:

There has long been an alliance between the Eastern corporations and the gallus-snapping Texas politicians. The politicians furnish the corny appeals to provincial prejudice, the corporations furnish the money . . . The techniques get a good deal of help from the strict, deadpan coverage accorded by the daily press. However silly the outcries and ululations, they are recorded with a solid respect.²³

The newspaper took an interest in the kind of literature that Texas was producing and sought to analyse what this writing said about the condition of the state. This, of course, given the predominance in Texas culture of the white male image, meant that the *Spectator* expended much of its energy discussing the status of white Texas manhood. The newspaper included comment and literary reviews by writers such as

J. Frank Dobie, who wrote of the *Spectator* that: 'It "talks Texas" all right, but it talks with critical brightness and urbane realism.'²⁴ It is interesting, given the predominance of a Texas historical context in his own work, that Dobie's main cultural focus in the *Spectator* was to congratulate contemporary Texas writing for the fact that it had 'gone far afield from the traditional glorification of the past.' He cited Hart Stillwell's *Border City* (1945) and Donald Joseph's *Straw in the South Wind* (1946) as examples of how this had been achieved.²⁵

Stillwell himself occasionally wrote for the *Spectator*. His novel, *Border City*, was an attempt to assess from a liberal perspective the unequal struggle of Mexicans in a white-dominated border town. In the process, it condemned white, male-dominated Texas border society. Another of Stillwell's books, *Uncovered Wagon* (1947) was reviewed in the *Spectator* or, to be more precise, a *New York Times* review was republished in the paper. The *Spectator* editor felt reluctant to review the work of one of his own, but was in accord with the good review in the *Times*, 'whose praise,' he wrote, 'in our words may have sounded over-zealous.' The *New York Times* reviewer, E. B. Garside, wrote of Stillwell's book:

There is a certain amount of wild hyperbole, but no more than is justified.

Essentially Mr Stillwell's book . . . is a study of character, in a larger sense the character of Texas.²⁶

The main male character in *Uncovered Wagon* is the patriarch of a family called the Endicotts. 'Old Man' Endicott is typical of the breed of stock Texas character who had made a reputation in a more violent time and had consequently developed a set of unmovable principles. He would later struggle to come to terms with the changes

when his offspring demanded different things and chose another outlook on life.

Variations on the character can be found in Texas-based films of the post-War era such as *Duel in the Sun* (1946), *Written on the Wind* (1956), *Giant* (1956), *The Big Country* (1958), and *Home From the Hill* (1960). What is relevant here is not that such characterisations existed, but that a writer for the *Spectator* should engage in such stereotypical characterisation and that the *Spectator* should approve of it without some kind of negative comment. This is an indication that those who set the editorial tone of the newspaper did not necessarily see the tired and overused images of white Texas maleness at this point as being detrimental to the main cultural thrust of the *Spectator* itself. This, however, was to change over the last remaining months of the newspaper's existence.

In July 1947, a new regular feature was introduced into the newspaper.

Commencing with a piece on Katherine Anne Porter, the *Spectator* initiated a book section, edited by Charles Ramsdell. The main concern of the feature was 'with ideas in general, and especially with those ideas that may conceivably have some effect on the state of civilisation around here, where we live.' On the question of politics, Ramsdell committed the paper to the following:

When some politician gets delusions of literacy and busts into print, we will let him have it. Likewise, we are laying for those writers who are always ready to break a lance in the service of power and privilege, in order to keep or gain a solid position in a lavish trough.²⁷

This unambiguous statement of intent created a new cultural focus in the *Spectator* that encouraged its writers to engage with the image of Texas as created by the state's

literati. Although Ramsdell's column, and his views on writers such as John Lomax, George Sessions Perry and Porter herself, never developed into a profound intellectual forum, it did help to attract to the newspaper the kind of writers who wished to engage in cultural debate.

The fundamental problem with the idea of engaging in literary debate around Texas literature lay in the fact that the core subject matter was extremely limited, both in social and intellectual scope. Contributors to the debate on literature in the *Spectator* freely admitted as much. H. G. Whittington's assessment of Texas writing was that it contained 'a stifling unoriginality, a hopeless averageness, no genius, no glimpses of greatness.'²⁸ This left critics to engage in a campaign of almost undiluted criticism of the standard and content of Texas literature, which, almost inevitably, turned to how the male-centric image of the state impacted on the standard of aesthetic output.

A number of articles, appearing in the *Spectator* in 1948, dealt with the relationship between the standard Texas male image and Texas culture and society. Two writers in particular believed that there was a direct connection between the male Texas myth and the state's political circus. In March of that year, Mody Boatwright contributed a piece of work entitled 'Are Texans a Race of People?' Boatwright's purpose in writing this article was intensely political. He listed a series of reasons why Texans would think of themselves as unique. These included: pride, fighting tradition, sentimentality and a democratic tradition. Of the latter he wrote: 'We are traditionally a democratic people. Our folk hero is the cowboy, not the cattle baron, the train crew, not the owners of the railroad.' Boatwright, however, concluded that Texans were not essentially different from people of other states, and outlined his suspicions of those who would loudly proclaim a different viewpoint. He wrote:

Most Texans who like to think of themselves as belonging to a superior breed or race, I contemplate with amused indulgence, some with disgust, and a few with a slight degree of uneasiness.

Boatwright then got to the crux of the point he was making:

If I were a propagandist for reaction, I would try this technique: I would first try to convince the people I wanted to influence that they were a distinct race, different from and superior to other peoples. Then I would construct a part for them, attributing to their forefathers only those attitudes I was trying to foster. Any other attitudes I would denounce as un-Texan.²⁹

The references here to the methods of totalitarian regimes are clear, as is the inference that Texas was potentially on a similar path. Boatwright is accusing those in Texas who sought to construct an aura of superiority around the exclusively male image of the state of colluding in such political extremism. ✓

A few weeks later the *Spectator* carried another article which was, in sentiment, similar to Boatwright's. J. A. Burkhardt, an academic who had recently been a visiting teacher of government at the University of Texas, contributed a critique entitled 'Frontier Myth and Texas Politics'. Burkhardt directly accused Texas politicians of, among other things, wrapping themselves in the overtly masculine myths of Texas history. Burkhardt's outsider's perspective was wide-ranging and, at times, vague. He was, however, unambiguous on his key point: 'There is not much doubt that the myth is operating in present-day Texas politics.' Burkhardt went on to comment:

It is important to note that in every recent gubernatorial campaign which has been strongly contested, cowboy songs and the ten-gallon Stetson hat have made their appearance, and in at least one campaign, rope twirling and fox-horn tooting have been presented. Every petitioner advertises his grassroots background, and each of the recent candidates to be elected has identified himself as a cattleman or ranch owner. In view of this trend, one is forced to conclude that the political value of a pair of cowboy boots is very high in Texas politics.³⁰

Burkhart continued with his assessment of 'how attitudes coincident with the frontier have been translated into political action.' He cited Pappy O'Daniel's use of a labouring man image: 'My father died in overalls.' He also explained how a frontier image did not sit comfortably with the arts and professions. He then went on to state his belief that 'the use of the frontier myth in a Texas election has serious consequences.' He continued:

It is a well-known fact that the frontier was basically conservative. Time-established ways and old behavior patterns were considered best; those institutions which were once accepted become correct guides of conduct and action ever afterward. In like manner, today, the idealization of the frontier in politics or fiction tends to create an old rather than a new look. With the past on a pedestal, conservatism is implicitly made attractive; fixed ideas and philosophies are given a running start. Social and economic change, which have cold motors in any environment, are given additional handicaps in the

Lone Star state. Here the situation is more than measurably disturbing since the ownership and control of natural resources lies with powerful vested interests.

To this group the watchword is conservatism; the status is quo.³¹

Burkhart's critique was a plea to his fellow liberals in Texas not to allow the state's ruling elite to control all aspects of the state's culture. Ironically, his request came in the last edition of the *Spectator*, which folded due to lack of money.

Many of the writers and social commentators who contributed to the *Texas Spectator* between 1945 and 1948 believed that the state's ruling elite was employing the strongest cultural feature of Texas, the male-dominated historical myths, to buttress its own continued dominance. Many of these commentators believed that this condition had serious implications for the future of the political system in Texas and, therefore, needed to be addressed.

When the *Texas Spectator* ceased publication in 1948, it left a void in the Texas press that was not to be filled until the emergence of the *Texas Observer* in 1954. In the intervening years the image of Texas and its manhood continued to fill the newspapers and magazines of America. The most important feature of this coverage was that the phenomenon of the Texas oilman and his excesses, which had been around for almost half a century, reached the height of its popularity (or notoriety) at this time.³² As a result of this, the image of white Texas maleness that was addressed by the *Spectator* in 1948 was different from that which was of concern to the *Texas Observer* in the mid to late 1950s.

Most commentators acknowledged that the image of Texas manhood was changing, although the degree and relevance of the change was contested. In his book

The Typical Texan (1952), which examined the image of the state and its maleness from the earliest years of Texas existence, Joseph Leach declared that:

Outsiders also think most of the Texans are oil barons, cattle barons, cotton barons, and barons of other kinds who can make money like Croesus; but this is a mere detail in the over-all figure that the Typical Texan cuts nationally.³³

Leach did not recognise that the emergence of the Texas millionaire had fundamentally changed the face of the state, as it was perceived both nationally and internally. The *Spectator's* focus on the image and its connection with Texas conservatism, which emerged in the abovementioned articles from 1948, was to be a regular and powerful feature of the *Texas Observer* from its inception in 1954 through to the assassination of President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, in Dallas in 1963.

Texas Observer

A number of important factors make the *Texas Observer* an ideal focus for examination. The first is the newspaper's willingness, especially in its first decade of existence, to engage with the socio-political and cultural context of the Texas male image. This took the form of critical reviews of selected cinematic representations of Texas, as well as reviews of a wide range of books about the condition of contemporary Texas society, both fiction and non-fiction, and books on Texas history. This was a time when the portrayal of white Texas masculinity in film and literature was at its peak of popularity. High profile accounts of the historical exploits of men

associated with Texas were offered by Hollywood in films such as *The Americano* (1954), starring Glenn Ford; *Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier* (1955), with Fess Parker; *The Last Command* (1955), featuring Sterling Hayden; *The Tall Men* (1955), with Clark Gable; *The Searchers* (1956), starring John Wayne; the Disney favourite *Old Yeller* (1957); *The Big Country* (1958), starring Gregory Peck; *Rio Bravo* (1959), again with Wayne; *The Wonderful Country* (1959) with Robert Mitchum; *The Unforgiven* (1960), starring Burt Lancaster; and two more John Wayne films, *The Alamo* (1960) and *The Comancheros* (1961). Cinematic representations of contemporary Texans included Charlton Heston in *Lucy Gallant* (1955); the archetypal Texas-movie *Giant* (1956); the melodrama *Written on the Wind* (1956); with Robert Stack and Rock Hudson; *Pillow Talk* (1959), which again featured Rock Hudson, this time as pseudo-Texas character Rex Stetson; *Home From the Hill* (1960), with Robert Mitchum; *Walk on the Wild Side* (1962), featuring Lawrence Harvey; James Garner as another spoof Texas stereotype, Henry Tyroon, in *The Wheeler Dealers* (1963); and Paul Newman as the seminal, eponymous anti-hero *Hud* (1963). In the mid to late 1950s, the Texas-born actors Audie Murphy and Fess Parker, whose personae as artists included an overt identification with Texas, were top box-office in America.

The portrayal of the Texas male character in all of these films was dependent on the whim of the film-makers. Don Graham, for example, points out that the characterisation of the legendary Texas cattleman, Shanghai Pierce, in director John Sturges' version of *The Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), was as 'a dandyish, overbearing would-be tyrant whom Wyatt Earp tamed handily.'³⁴ J. Frank Dobie's view was somewhat different, describing the same character as 'Massive framed, bugle-voiced, infinite in wit and anecdote, imperious as well as genial in manner.'³⁵

It is the *Observer's* willingness to deal with this kind of conflict in characterisation of the Texas male image that makes an in-depth scrutiny of the newspaper so valuable.

Other factors that make the *Observer* unique in Texas journalism are its longevity and consistency. The paper's views on social, cultural and political matters can be tracked over a meaningful period of time, in this particular instance over a tumultuous decade for Texas between the newspaper's inception in 1954 and the events in Dallas, Texas, in November 1963. Throughout this period, the newspaper maintained a unique and consistently liberal, anti-Establishment outlook, which was intensely concerned with how the image of Texas and its men was being employed for socio-political and cultural purposes. This concern, although consistent throughout the period, peaked in a period of passionate self-examination in the aftermath of the Kennedy killing.

The next chapter of this thesis will concentrate on just how culpable the newspaper believed the image of white Texas men was in creating the conditions that allowed a President of the United States to be brutally assassinated in Texas. The aftermath of Kennedy's killing, and the subsequent rise to the Presidency of one of their own, Lyndon Johnson, involved a large degree of hand-wringing among liberal Texans. Understanding how this trauma manifested itself in the pages of the *Observer* goes a long way toward gaining an appreciation of how the masculine image of the state was seen by Texas liberals at this defining moment in Texas cultural history. This, however, only has real relevance if an understanding of the position of the *Texas Observer* prior to the killing of Kennedy is appreciated.

The *Texas Observer* was founded in 1954 as a response to the overwhelmingly conservative direction that Texas politics had taken since the election of Governor W. Lee 'Pappy' O'Daniel in 1938. The need for an independent newspaper, free of

Establishment influence, was brought home to liberal Texans following what they saw as press manipulation during the 1954 Democratic gubernatorial primary between ultra-conservative Alan Shivers and liberal Ralph Yarborough. Financial backing for the fledgling newspaper came from the heir to the Kirby lumber empire, Frankie Randolph. Other wealthy Texans, who described themselves as Adlai Stevenson Democrats, added moral and financial support to the paper, including oil millionaire J. R. Parten. The *Texas Observer* also received massive support from Texas labour organisations, civil rights groups, and liberal academics and intellectuals at the University of Texas. Despite this, the *Observer* immediately declared itself to be independent of vested interest. Its original masthead ran a quote from Henry David Thoreau, which read: 'The one great rule of composition is to speak the truth.' Alongside this the newspaper declared: 'We will serve no group or party but will hew hard to the truth as we find it and the right as we see it.' Ronnie Dugger, who later added to a crowded masthead the additional phrases 'A Journal of Free Voices' and 'A Window to the South,' was approached to become the first editor. The *Observer* did indeed follow a unique path in Texas politics in championing such controversial issues as racial integration, support for labour unions, opposition to the Vietnam War, as well as seeking to undermine, mainly through the exposure of corruption and the provision of an outlet for liberal Democrats views, the political control of the state's ruling elite.

From its earliest issues a major concern of the *Observer* was how the Texas male image impacted on the socio-political and cultural outlook of the state. Those critics who wrote for the *Texas Observer* such as Ronnie Dugger, Willie Morris and Billy Lee Brammer saw much of what was offered in film and literature as being representative of Texas as total nonsense. They expressed this sentiment with copious

amounts of humour, irony, and indignation. For the most part, the more pompous the cinematic or literary statement, the greater the degree of scorn that was poured on it by the *Observer* reviewers. While the priority in the paper was always political point scoring, the *Observer* was also passionately concerned with the image of Texas and, therefore, gave short shrift to those whom they believed were misrepresenting the culture of the state for political ends.

On a front page spread on 10 August 1955, the *Observer* presented a series of five cartoon figures representing the changing face of cowboy attire. The feature was entitled 'The Cowboy's Lament' and was accompanied by the following text:

1. It all started with the cowhand. You used to find him from Cuero in the east to Encinal in the south and from Uvalde in the southwest to Pecos in the far west and then up north to Dalhart. Note his high serviceable boots and his dignified reserve. He was slim enough to sit on his bootheels.
2. Since he was a Texas tradition and a popular symbol, we soon got the senatorial cowboy. He switched from Bull Durham to Havanas, and he conservatively exposed only his left boot top, but this is gorgeously stitched with an inlaid sunflower in bloom. He is not so reserved.
3. From the legislator through the lobbyist, the fad has spread in the chain-hotel crowd. Now we see the Cowboy Salesman, who has added the innovation of the crepe sole boot. Note that he is also wearing ladies heels, because the Dallas cobbler was used to a conclave heel and not an undershot one.
4. The full flowering of cowboy regalia materialised in the Oilman Cowboy. Insisting on authenticity, he has gone back to Bull Durham and has his genuine cowboy shirts tailored in Hollywood. He shows his Americanism,

his tender heartedness, and his love of beauty in his personalized boot design, which is in purple, red, and green inlay on cordovan with alligator skin bottoms.

5. Now we see our original cowhand riding into the west. Equipped with neither Havanas, sample case, nor Cadillac, he has become too conspicuous on the Texas scene, and that reserve which approaches bashfulness has caused him to move on to make room for the typical Texans who have taken his place.³⁶

This satirical swipe at the triumph of superficiality over authenticity, which stretched right across Texas male society, from the cowboy to the politician, from the salesman to the oilman, gives a flavour of the social, political and cultural priorities of the *Observer*.

The feature purports to understand the social and cultural significance of a new breed of Texas manhood, whose priority was to create an artificial image by tapping into the style and demeanour of the working cowboy. As a central plank of Texas male iconography, the working cowboy was advanced by the *Observer* as an example of what was generally regarded in Texas as pure, honest and untroubled by the concerns and pressures of modern life. All of the types attacked in this piece were integral parts of the conformist Texas societal structure. Each of these characters, in their own way, played a crucial role in maintaining the status of the ruling elite. Association with the cowboy, even through dress code and mannerisms, lent authenticity and, therefore, credibility to professions tarnished, in the eyes of the *Observer*, by association with those who ran the state.

Inside the same issue, James P. Hart addressed yet another type of Texan whose purpose in life went beyond a simple attachment to style. Hart wrote:

He is the big-rich type, well-fed and loud-mouthed, with more oil and gas wells than he can count, and with a consuming ambition to use his wealth, not only to control the political and economic machinery of his own state, but to throw his weight around generally and if possible to control at least one segment of the politics and the economy of the entire if not the whole world.³⁷

Hart here identified the more sinister and overtly capitalistic face of Texas – the antithesis of which he declared was J. Frank Dobie, ‘a man who looks you straight in the eye, with love in his heart.’³⁸

This kind of social comment marks the *Observer* as being unique among the Texas press of the time. Part of the reason for this is that journalists on the paper were given a wide brief. The necessity on a small publication for writers to adapt to various tasks meant that, in one issue, a reporter could cover a labour dispute or a case of book censoring and in the next issue would review a book or film. Among other things, this ensured that political awareness was never far from the minds of those who worked on the *Observer*.

The attitude of the *Observer* toward the kind of film that sought to represent historical Texas was typically articulated in the review of the 1955 version of the Alamo story, *The Last Command*. This review lampooned the film, which was directed by Frank Lloyd and starred Sterling Hayden as Jim Bowie and Arthur Hunnicut as Davy Crockett. Ronnie Dugger wrote the review of the film under a headline which read: ‘Jim Bowie Lionized – Hollywood Recreates the Alamo Siege – A Few Frills of Course.’ Dugger commenced the review with his understanding of the prime motivation for making the film:

What with Davy Crockett's dollar value waning, Hollywood has turned to the Alamo again. *The Last Command* is an attempt to lionize Jim Bowie in a 'recreation of the siege'. Undoubtedly the nation's kiddies will now set up a clamour for rubber Bowie knives.

Dugger's pointed scepticism was prompted by the mass commercial exploitation of the Davy Crockett image created by films such as *Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier* (1955), starring Texas-born Fess Parker as the eponymous hero, and the Disney-made Davy Crockett television films of the same period.³⁹

The journalist's cynical lack of faith in the ability of the film even remotely to reflect the conditions of the Alamo in 1836 continued when he turned to discussion of the portrayal of Bowie by Sterling Hayden and the characterisation and motivation of the Alamo's defenders:

Sterling Hayden plays Bowie with all the dramatic power of the legendary old Indian warrior 'Chief Frozen Face.' The scriptwriter conceived of early 'Texians' as poverty stricken both in language and imagination. ('Ben Milam? He was a great man,' intoned Bowie after learning of Milam's death in San Antonio). The Texians fight 'for what we think right,' as they say again and again. Hayden's Bowie is taken to look out over the dusty plains and saying, 'Yep, there's some good men in these parts.'

Similarly dismissed are the film's love interest, which demands the creation of a fictional lover for Bowie, a Mexican girl called Consuelo, and a fictional meeting

between Bowie and Santa Anna where Bowie is offered a way out and, as Dugger tells it, 'bravely refuses.' Dugger alluded to the undoubted potential of the story of the Alamo and expressed genuine inquisitiveness with regard to the nature of the men who actually died there. He complained: 'Slurring over every subtle dramatic possibility in favor of stock melodrama, the film provides no image of what kind of men died with the "name" heroes.' His interest here, typically for an *Observer* reviewer, went beyond a concern for the great and the good of the situation and focused on those who had been unheralded both by history and Hollywood. Dugger concluded his review with a final swipe at the clichéd dialogue and the melodramatic, unauthentic portrayal of Texas manhood. He wrote:

But never let it be said that Hollywood doesn't know a dramatic scene when it sees one. The rain sprinklers are turned on as Travis asks the Texians to cross the line, gulps heroically and articulates, 'Thank you, men.'⁴⁰

Dugger's review was dismissive of what he saw as the ludicrously inaccurate portrayal of Texas masculinity, a fault that he believed had serious socio-political connotations. His disappointment is keener because of his belief that the continued failure of Hollywood to appreciate the obvious strengths in the Alamo story left Texas, and its male-dominated history, seriously misrepresented and open to this nonsensical kind of cinematic distortion.

The perfect example of how the *Observer* saw the image of Texas in film was the newspaper's response to the George Stevens movie version of the Edna Ferber story, *Giant*, which was released in the state in November 1956. The story covers a period of a quarter century from the 1920s and tells the family tale of wealthy Texas rancher,

Bick Benedict (Rock Hudson) and his Maryland-born wife, Leslie (Elizabeth Taylor). Leslie befriends a local ranch hand, Jett Rink (James Dean), who falls in love with her. When that love is unfulfilled, Jett determines, through a cloud of classic Dean moodiness, to exact his revenge on Bick. This he is able to do when he strikes oil on his tiny patch of land and becomes rich and powerful. Leslie is an independent and caring spirit, so when this aspect of her character manifests itself in an interest in the welfare of the local Mexican population, it brings her into conflict with her racist husband. As befits a 1950s soap opera, the offspring only confuse the situation, with the son, Jordan (Dennis Hopper) marrying a Mexican girl and rejecting the ranch-life that his father had planned and the daughter, Luz (Carroll Baker), becoming the mistress of the black-hearted, and by now alcoholic, Rink. Bick beats Rink up and is in turn beaten by the racist owner of a small diner who refuses to serve a mixed-race family. This act of humanist bravado is enough to make Bick into Leslie's hero and allows the film to end with the promise of all-round happiness based on Leslie's liberal concept of racial harmony.

Giant is ideal for a number of reasons. The most important of these are the range of issues contained within the film and the impact that it had among Texas audiences and critics. The novel had been the source of much controversy in Texas when it was published in 1952. Ferber was a woman, a Northerner and Jewish – and had written a best-selling book with an overtly Texas theme. In many sections of 1950s Texas society, these facts alone were enough to create controversy. Ferber's take on Texas, however, included, at the core of the novel, the issues of racial discrimination, mixed racial marriage, poverty, cultural conflicts between the Old South and Texas, the internal Texas debate between ranching and oil as a way of making money, class conflict, tax concessions for the rich, political corruption and the societal role and

foibles of Texas oil millionaires, the so-called 'Big Rich'. In both book and film, these controversial issues were discussed, analysed and exposed through an examination of the cultural behaviour and racial and socio-economic dominance of white Texas masculinity.

Interest in the film was increased by a variety of factors. These included the epic nature of the movie, the fact that it was filmed on location in Marfa, Texas, that it starred the recently-deceased James Dean and other top-rated box-office stars including Elizabeth Taylor and Rock Hudson, and was directed, in Oscar-winning form, by a man with a proven track record. All of this, as well as the fact that Texas-based movies were extremely popular in the state, combined to ensure that the book and the subsequent film version caught the imagination of the state's reading and cinema-going public and became the subject of much debate in the Texas press. The *Observer's* Billy Lee Brammer wrote the following on the controversy that Ferber's book created in the state:

In Texas, in the fall of 1952, there came upon this land a great wail, a whoop and a holler and a gnashing of teeth. Edna Ferber, a bittersweet old lady who specializes in writing only one kind of novel – the best seller – had written another. This one was about Texas.⁴¹

Giant was based around an external perception of the image of contemporary Texas masculinity. The Texas maleness examined in the story was representative of the rich and powerful in Texas society and was the personification of all that the *Observer* purported to oppose. It is, therefore, important to gauge the attitude of the *Observer* toward this major cultural phenomenon.

On its release, Harris Green reviewed the film for the *Observer*. Green commented initially on the movie's potential for controversy, before going on to catalogue the areas of potential debate that, he believed, were so obvious and accepted as to be beyond controversy. He commented:

if this be treason, then what's all the fuss about? Stevens has said in this beautifully tooled movie nothing more startling or heretical than that Texas has a race problem, and that intolerance is cruel and groundless, that people who care for nothing in life but money are bound to be frustrated boors, that great stretches of this state are culturally and physically arid, and that any girl who comes from Maryland to West Texas is in for a shock. A sounder, more succinct assemblage of aphorisms cannot be found this side of a geometry text.⁴²

Green, of course, was only too well aware that what was obvious and unarguable to a writer on the *Observer* was anathema to other sections of Texas society. These observations on the film's view of how race, culture and money impacted on Texas society were politically loaded and designed to challenge the male-dominated social status quo.

Green was quick to praise the merits of the film and, especially, the craftsmanship displayed by Stevens. He wrote that 'in its conception and execution it [*Giant*] reveals the work of a master, and, like any work of art, must be seen for itself alone'.⁴³ Green also made the obvious point that the male characters featured were unrepresentative and that Texas and its population was diverse and deserved more

than simplistic parody. Green observed that, 'as a portrait of Texas it is frequently caricature.' He continued:

As set forth here, Texas is populated by mean tempered scions of cattle-barons who dabble in oil, gas, sulphur, and the like, and downtrodden Mexicans who have hearts of gold, live in absolute squalor, and endure discrimination with dampened eyes. Freshman students of sociology have been failed for less.⁴⁴

Green's resentment of the image of Texas being dominated by men whose sole purpose in life was single-mindedly to make profit is obvious. Significantly, he also found fault in what the film did not say about Texas. He wrote:

[*Giant*] can only be faulted for not probing deeper into such highly sensitive areas of urbanisation, the growing pains of labor, the wrenching shift from an agricultural to an industrial economy, and the dominance of Northern industry with its local representatives among the big rich.⁴⁵

These were among the issues that took precedence in the *Observer*. As previously stated, it was a deliberate tactic of the newspaper to raise political points in cultural reviews. For instance, when the Ferber novel was released in paperback early in 1957, the review in the *Observer*, written by James W. Byrd, covered the same political ground.⁴⁶ For the *Texas Observer*, the problems that afflicted Texas society were caused by the kind of men portrayed in *Giant*. Writers for the newspaper, therefore, deeply resented a literary or filmic image which ensured that this version of white Texas maleness dominated the idea of the state.

Green went on to criticise what the film did offer in relation to Texas society. He informed his readers:

They [the main characters] and their descendants endure a lot, making money and all, but for all their variations they cannot be considered representatives of this state. Nor can their misadventures be adjudged successful either as drama or life since all the crises are frequently trumped up and leave them comparatively unchanged. Only in scenes where it holds up the sacrosanct depletion allowances to be something less than an act of God or shows the brutality of discrimination or presents the clash of the new and the old in a family argument does *Giant* become for a reel or two what its makers thought it was; both an allegory and life itself.⁴⁷

Green's evident lack of enthusiasm in this instance was based on the social irrelevance of the storyline and the fact that the powerful male characters portrayed had little real connection to Texas society as he saw it. For Green, the moments of importance came when the film addressed contentious economic matters such as the Texas legislature's position on depletion allowances. These were issues that tended to show the dominant Texas male as greedy, corrupt and selfish.

Contemporaneous Texas-based films with less social resonance than *Giant* were usually treated with a mix of mockery and suspicion. The reviews of Hal Kantner's Elvis-vehicle, *Loving You* (1957) and another Robert Parrish film, *Lucy Gallant* (1955), fell into this category. Parrish's film was especially interesting for the *Observer* due to the fact that the then current Texas governor, Allan Shivers, had a cameo role in the film. Shivers was yet another rightist Texas politician who was

never reluctant – despite his upbringing as the son of a lawyer in the heart of timber country in East Texas – to dress up in classic male Western dress.⁴⁸ The reviewer, Dan Strawn, went after Shivers with relish:

I seem to remember his name from somewhere or other in the *Observer*. I believe it was the editorials. From the reviews he was getting there, he had no talent whatever in what he was doing, so I became interested in how he was making out as an actor.⁴⁹

The remainder of the review concentrated on the familiar *Observer* theme of how unsuccessful the film was in replicating an authentic Texas locale and atmosphere. Strawn concentrated on the series of obvious stereotypes that the film-makers had deemed suitable for their portrayal of Texas. These included oil strikes, the greed of oil companies, the behaviour of the oil-rich, dusters, and a ‘local honky-tonk, The Red Derrick’. All of Strawn’s complaints were expressed with contemptuous resignation.

Loving You, Elvis Presley’s second film venture, centred on the rise to stardom of a young Texas singer called Deke Rivers. The *Observer* reviewer, Harris Green, adopted a supercilious tone from the start. He wrote:

All the audience sympathised with the kid except me. When his agent attempted to explain away the havoc he caused by saying that Stravinsky had caused riots too, I laughed outright . . . Later I discovered he was supposed to be a Texan, I left, the pounding of guitars breaking about me.⁵⁰

The Texas context of the film is slight and Elvis is simply Elvis without any stereotypical Texas characterisation. Nonetheless, Green's discomfiture at the realisation that Rivers is being put forward by Hollywood as a representative of white Texas manhood was enough to make him flee the movie-house. Despite the *Observer's* reluctance to embrace the phenomenon of Elvis Presley, the youth of Texas were especially noted as being among his most fanatical early followers. Green described the audience reaction to *Loving You* as 'tumultuous'. This is borne out by an article in *Billboard* from 1955, which read: 'Elvis Presley continues to gather speed over the South. West Texas is his hottest territory to date.'⁵¹ Serious political comment was the *Observer's* game and the intricacies of the state's youth culture, and what an audience of young Texans may have believed best represented Texas maleness, were not on its agenda. Elvis Presley in *Loving You* may have represented a competing view of white Texas maleness but it was not, in the view of the *Observer* reviewer, an image that was politically relevant. The *Observer* responded to the image of Texas men mainly when it was used to promote the interests of their political opponents in Texas. In these instances, they believed, the concept of white Texas manhood had the potential to have serious political and socio-economic consequences.

Literature

The *Observer's* stance on the value of Texas literature was consistent with its demand for authenticity when dealing with the image of the state. Those writers of whom the *Observer* approved conformed to a standard that was free of what the newspaper saw as clichéd characterisation, political subservience and literary

pretension. The *Observer* was not overly interested in how Texas was perceived in the rest of America or throughout the world. Its focus was firmly on how best the image of Texas could serve the majority of the Texas people by conforming to a version of reality that had its roots in the socio-economic experience of that majority. In an *Observer* review of George Fuernmann's *The Reluctant Empire* (1957), J. Frank Dobie wrote: 'Most books and articles on Texas are puerile-minded, or timid in facing realities, or lacking otherwise in intellectual integrity.'⁵² This was the common opinion of the newspaper and it was one that was expressed repeatedly. All of this was part of a process within which the *Observer* questioned the quality and the relevance of literature that had as its core theme the state of Texas.⁵³

Those books which sought to examine Texas culturally, socially and historically and struck a chord with the liberal policy of the *Observer* were those that explored the heart of the Texas experience from a profound and serious intellectual perspective. These books managed to avoid clumsy and obvious characterisation of Texas manhood and set the state in a context that encouraged debate concerning the future of Texas as well as its past. Rupert Richardson's *Texas: The Lone Star State* (1958) was one example of the kind. Dugger cited this academic work in his review as an example of a perspective on Texas free of hyperbole and crass characterisation. He wrote, with reference to Richardson's section on Texas pre-history:

As we have increased to nine million, we have come to resent being considered provincial by people now living in the eastern United States . . . no one is provincial who lived where mountains moved or cultures died.⁵⁴

Dugger's review was acutely defensive. He believed that Richardson's book was free from the kind of exaggeration and ridiculous categorisation of Texas and its manhood that had come to be the norm. The section on Texas pre-history proved, indeed, according to Dugger, that male-dominated cultures had come and gone in Texas and that the preoccupation of some writers with the currently in-vogue demeanour of white Texas maleness was transient and ultimately meaningless. This was not, however, the common position of the *Observer* when reviewing literature about the state. The reason for this was that books such as Richardson's were not the customary fare in Texas literature.

One target of *Observer* cynicism was the Texas Institute of Letters. Of the winner of one of the Institute's awards, the *Observer* commented: 'the winner of the 1955 poetry prize says modestly that his chief claim to being a man of letters is his twenty-year tenure with the United States Post Office.'⁵⁵ This comment was more typical of the *Observer's* casual disregard for those who set themselves up as the arbiters of the written word in Texas, than it was a comment on that particular poet. The *Observer* believed that such attempts to organise literature in Texas were done from a perspective unconnected with literary merit. Snobbery and patronage were, according to Ronnie Dugger, the main motivation of the Texas Institute of Letters. This meant that these self-appointed guardians of literature did not take seriously – certainly not as seriously as the *Observer* – the matter of the image of Texas and its masculinity.

The style of writing and general demeanour of *Dallas Morning News* journalist Lon Tinkle, who was an untiring supporter of the Texas Institute of Letters, drew the scorn of Dugger. The *Observer* editor saw the *News* columnist as a good example of the kind of affected personality who was determined to raise the value of Texas

culture by inflicting on it his own bourgeois values. Dugger's overtly male-based description of Tinkle read as follows:

He is sporting a most glorious mustache, black and bushy, and when one sees him moving swiftly from one celebrity to the next at the head table, one is reminded irresistibly of a riverboat gambler, and a great French lover.⁵⁶

The description suggests that Dugger believed there was something of the cad about Tinkle. Of course, the implication from Dugger is that the lack of honesty in the character went beyond his mien and was a direct attack on what Tinkle, as a *Dallas Morning News* journalist, symbolized as a representative of the cultural hierarchy of the Texas ruling elite. It is also ironic that Dugger, a journalist who was prepared to pour scorn on any unrealistic description of Texas maleness, should describe Tinkle in such an exaggerated way.

In a literary review of Robert Wilder's best selling novel *The Wine of Youth* (1955), Dugger again articulated and rationalised his frustration at the common kind of superficial representation of white Texas maleness. He quoted the following passage from the book:

A man who ain't got the guts to do his own killin' deserves to git it. A man that's got to go out and hire himse'f a pistolero, like Fitz done, jus' don't deserve God's fine, clean, Texas air.

Then he commented as follows:

It is this inept and inaccurate nonsense that really draws my blood. I don't care about a man's insulting an area – Texas needs plenty of insulting – but when he slaps into words some cloudy image of a race he has drawn from Bob Hope jokes, western movies, and novels written about times past, it's a literary outrage.⁵⁷

Dugger believed that shallow stereotyped depictions of white Texas maleness of this kind were not simply bad literature, but also served a socio-political purpose. He understood the role that a standardised version of white Texas masculinity played in the continued control of Texas society by the Texas ruling elite and that, through a concentration on the superficial, mythical orthodoxy, the less comfortable realities of Texas manhood based on race and class were left undiscovered. This, Dugger believed, did a disservice both to the image of the state as well as to those who were excluded.

Wilder was a non-Texan and, as with the controversy surrounding Edna Ferber's novel *Giant*, this created problems for those in the state concerned with how inaccurate representations of the state impacted on Texas culture. On this point Dugger argued:

Novels on Texas by outsiders are important for two reasons: they may teach us about ourselves, or they may give us cause to rebuke ourselves for our laziness, which has permitted literary hashers like Robert Wilder to commit materialistic rapine on the subjects that are ours.⁵⁸

The degree of *Observer* criticism aimed at non-Texan contributors to the image of the state was also dependent on the sympathetic nature – or otherwise – of the political message they conveyed. James W. Byrd's review of John Steinbeck's short novel *The Short Reign of Pippin IV* (1957), for example, contained the following:

'Although Texans may not be pleased with some parts, there is much in this book that will delight them – if they are liberal Democrats as Steinbeck is.'⁵⁹ The book contains a number of direct accusations against the Texas rich, one of which is the suggestion that oil and cattle barons in Texas 'rig the tax laws and the utilities laws'.⁶⁰

Dugger's defensive resentment at *The Wine of Youth* was not only based on his poor opinion of Wilder's literary ability. His attack was also founded on his belief that books like Wilder's washed over the intricacies of Texas society and of the place of men in that society. He accused Wilder of adding to a long list of literary masculine stereotypes which prevented the men of the state from being seen in a realistic and non-patronising way. He continued:

We do not know anything about the people he tries unsuccessfully to create; we do not know any more about the customs and the values of the Mexican people in South Texas than we would if we decided to leave our California villa to make a quick swing through South Texas 'and pick up some notes for a novel.'⁶¹

It was not, of course, only non-Texan contributors to the Texas image whom writers for the *Observer* dismissed. However, those novelists such as Wilder and Ferber, who had the temerity to use the state as a literary setting, could expect the same kind

of treatment from the *Observer* as the majority of outsiders who sought to portray Texas in film.

In the course of yet another tirade against the misrepresentation of Texas in a book that purported to uncover the truth about the state, in this instance Green Peyton's *The Face of Texas*, Dugger wrote the following:

Taken as a class, the Texas myths are based on Texas exaggeration, a standardized concept of 'The Texan' with invariable attributes that have social and political implications, the simplification of state and local history in the lives of a few rugged individualists, and an untraceable provincialism that is proud of some Texas things on a highly selective basis and silent or mistaken about the rest. They are elaborations of the values and purposes never better epitomized than by former Governor Allan Shivers oratorical category, 'The Texxxx-iss Spirit.' Nor is the Shivers example idly chosen, for as they are presented these books, brags, jokes, stories, stereotypes, and slogans are misleadingly and propagandistically conservative in their import. One may differ whether this or that manifestation fulfils these various qualifications – most of the magazine articles do; John Wayne's *The Alamo* certainly does . . . It is obvious that such myths distort the truth they deal with and omit most of it. They ignore the facts about the state's social neglect of the underprivileged, exploitation of the racial minorities and mass scale acceptance of federal aid. Because it would make the stereotyped Texan absurd, they neglect to mention that Texans sometimes join unions, go to school on federal scholarships, pay federal income tax, vote half and half between John Tower and Ralph Yarborough, live mostly in cities and partly in slums, approve of school

integration in Belden Polls two to one, and retire on old age pensions and federal social security checks. They forget the Texan is human before he is Texan, struggling to find his identity within modern nationalist industrialism more than he's a rugged individualist, scared of cops and cops and jails more than he's stupid and cruel, and married and childed and routined more than he's gallant or wealthy or free . . . It is time that we cease being coerced by the threat of being thought crotchety and refuse to smile indulgently when the chauvins, the braggarts, the quipsters, the stereotyped launch into their spiels, not only, not even because their mythology strengthens the conservative frame of mind in Texas, but also because they are subverting a civilised attention to truth.⁶²

This tirade represents the clearest articulation of the *Observer's* position on the abuses of the Texas image. Dugger pointed directly to those he believed to be the major promoters and the key beneficiaries of the distorted icon. Cited are Allan Shivers and John Wayne, one a keystone conservative Texas politician and the other a mainstay of the stereotypical, cinematic Texas male, as well as being a prominent and outspoken American conservative.⁶³ Dugger accused Shivers, governor of Texas between 1949 and 1957, of profiting by association with a deliberately narrow and caricatured version of the Texas image. John Wayne's ideological film venture *The Alamo* (1960) certainly fits the bill of being 'propagandistically conservative'. As outlined in the previous chapter, Wayne not only believed in the symbolic significance of the Alamo but also in the emblematic strength of his film version of events there. Wayne saw Texas as a bastion of conservatism, which offered sustenance to his rightist political philosophy. The image of white Texas manhood was a crucial foundation in Wayne's construction

of the image of the state. Dugger, on the other hand, responded to such assaults on the history of the state with a mix of humour, irony and pointed political invective.

The *Observer*, as represented here by Dugger's views, saw bland acceptance of the literary mediocrity he found in Peyton's book and the cinematic propaganda of Wayne's film as being tantamount to accepting the values of the society that feeds from it. It was not simply a matter of literary taste that allowed Dugger to describe Peyton's work as 'vapid and vulnerable, so shallow, banal, tired, prosy, and strained'.⁶⁴ His real concerns lay firmly in his socio-political priorities and his determination that he, and his newspaper, should expose those who sought to employ the most obvious image of Texas – its manhood – to promote a conservative political agenda.

Peyton's book was almost incidental in Dugger's review. All the book did was provide the spark, which allowed Dugger's resentment regarding the image of Texas, and its capture by the forces of conservatism, to burn. The *Observer*, and Dugger in particular, saw this issue as a live and relevant topic. Previously, in October 1957, in an article entitled 'On Texasism and Texasisms', Dugger had railed against those in the state who felt at ease with, or who utilised for political or commercial purposes, a larger-than-life image of Texas. He explained: 'One could almost say the Texas myth has been made in Texas, by Texasisms, outcroppings of our insular self-consciousness which politicians play to and advertisers massage'.⁶⁵ Dugger told of the power of the anecdote in the creation of an internally-made Texas image. 'Texasisms,' he explained, 'can be used for pretty serious purposes.'⁶⁶ He accused the Texas press, in the person of Ernest Joiner of the *Ralls Banner*, and boorish rich men, personified in this instance in the character of Texas millionaire O. J. McCullough, and cited examples of how both had added to the Texas myth and had, in the process, contributed to a cultural environment where the vital realities of Texas life, as Dugger saw them, were sidelined.

Out-of-state advertisers, Dugger claimed, had ‘caught on to this famous streak in Texans’ and had created campaigns that put a Texas angle on brands of cigarettes, bourbon, automobiles and gasoline. One such read, ‘In Texas, we shoot any man who doesn’t order Bourbon.’⁶⁷ This macho bravado compounded the notion that powerful maleness of the type adopted by conservative Texas politicians dominated the culture of the state. Dugger claimed that this cultural atmosphere – in which one version of maleness was seen as being the most obvious representation of the state – made it more difficult for Texans to agree with Dugger that, in a state controlled by this type of man, all may not be well culturally, socially or economically.

The article, however, saves its venom for the way that politicians had used the image of the state to bolster their masculine image. The campaigns of prominent conservative political figures such as ‘Pappy’ O’Daniel, Allan Shivers, Price Daniel, Dwight Eisenhower and Haley, who all invoked a ‘Texas’ element in their self-promotion, were criticised. The tag ‘Texas-born’, for instance, almost constantly preceded the name of Eisenhower in campaign literature and in the supportive Texas press. On the demeanour of Haley, Dugger wrote:

J. Evetts Haley, the cowboy defender of the Texas plains, dresses and acts out the part of a western gentleman-hero. You can almost see him, thumbs hooked over his belt Wild Bill Hickock style, sidling up to some leftist badman and saying, ‘I’m a peaceable man.’⁶⁸

This, according to Dugger, was a classic example of the employment of a powerful Texas male demeanour for political gain. Dugger also stated that those in Texas who saw themselves as liberals were not above ‘this playing to provincialism.’ He quoted

from the campaign literature of the Stevenson Democrats who, when asking for funding, wrote: 'Please send a dollar or two to their national treasurer (a Texan).'⁶⁹

Dugger shared his crusade for a rethink of the accepted cultural reality with the majority of contributors to the *Observer*. However, the pervasive influence of cultural and political conformity was so strong in Texas, especially before November 1963, that it did influence some contributors to the paper. The following review of William Warren Sterling's *Trails and Trials of a Texas Ranger* by Tom Sutherland gives a flavour of the intrusive power of the standardised icon:

Bill Sterling has not changed since I saw him last, he is the tall, striking and classic type of Texan that seems to call for a portrait . . . He was, as a younger man, like Buffalo Bill Cody, the sort of magnificent spectacle to lift a boy's heart or make a Hollywood scout reach for a contract form. The print [of an early picture of Sterling] conveys the unmistakable impression of muscle and nerve in prime readiness for the kind of action that has given the Texas Rangers a place in national legend.⁷⁰

Unusually for an *Observer* review, especially when discussing a standard account of white Texas masculinity, Sutherland's piece is free of irony. This review was not simply a eulogy to a physically impressive male figure. It was also a testament to the kind of white Texas masculinity that, in the standard historical version, was instrumental in bringing law and order to Texas, a version that the Establishment in the state had appropriated as their own. The history of the Texas Rangers includes varied accusations of racial and class-based bias, which resulted in the force being vilified by large sections of the Texas populace. It is surprising to find this kind of

fawning review, in respect of mythical and politically-charged Texas maleness, in the *Observer*. It was relatively easy for the *Observer* to expose what it saw as the right-wing extremists and cranks who infested and, indeed, influenced Texas society in the 1950s.⁷¹ It was also a straightforward political choice to report and support the myriad of bitter labour disputes and to expose the iniquities of racial segregation. It was, however, difficult for this organ of Texas liberalism to resist the massive cultural and social presence of male Texas mythology. It testifies more to the power of the stereotype and the sense, even among 'liberal' writers who understood the damaging potential of mythical Texas masculinity, that the stereotype had something to commend it, than it is an indictment of the failure of the *Observer* consistently to reject it.

This conflict between admiration of genuine masculine endeavour, and disapproval and disgust over the racial and political consequences of the use of the Texas male icon by the Texas right, is evident in the *Observer* review of ex-Ranger George Durham's book, *Taming the Nueces Strip* (1962). Written by Charles Ramsdell, the initial tone of the review was generally favourable. However, once into his stride, Ramsdell let fly with a volley of criticism. Of the methods and the outlook of Texas Ranger Captain L. H. McNelly, he wrote:

McNelly, it must be admitted, is somewhat repugnant in his subservience to wealth and power, which he seemed to regard as decency and respectability raised to a high degree. He was glad to let himself be outfitted by Capt King, of the famed King Ranch, and to serve the cattlemen's private ends. But was that cattleman really a paragon of decency? What about those Mexican ranches he is said to have resonated and annexed . . . In spite of the worshipful

attitude of the narrator toward his chief, the reader is never quite convinced that the Mexican ranchers who were shot up by McNelly . . . were just as legitimate as the Texans he protected. And then, there was his monstrous custom of turning over his captives, after torturing them to extract information, to a maniac who popped off their heads by lashing their necks to a tree and their feet to a horse.⁷²

Ramsdell understood the need for raw, manly courage and keen intelligence in an environment as fraught and dangerous as that offered by nineteenth-century Texas. It was, however, the contrast between these manly qualities and, as Ramsdell saw it, the deferential way in which they were used that stoked his ire.

Every opportunity was utilised by the *Observer* to point the finger at the imperfections of Texas society. When the English writer J. B. Priestley published his observations on Texas in his book *Journey Down a Rainbow* (1955), his opinions did not go unheeded. The untitled review in the *Observer* concentrated on Priestley's view of Texas as a victim of modernity. The writer stated:

Priestley sees that Texas is now a perfect example of admass, his name for 'the whole system of an increasing productivity, plus, inflation, plus a rising standard of material living, plus high pressure advertising and salesmanship, plus mass communications, plus cultural democracy and the creation of the mass mind, the mass man.' Priestley plunges into our own nightmare state of materialism, where 'you think everything is opening out when it is in fact narrowing and closing in on you. Finally you have to be half-witted or half-drunk all the time to endure it.'⁷³

This review, as was the common practise in the *Observer*, looked at the broader socio-political purpose of Priestley's work and determined to elicit from it pieces of information that would confirm the *Observer's* liberal position. In this case, Priestley's identification of a breed of Texas maleness, 'the mass man', was ideal fodder in the *Observer's* endeavour accurately to pinpoint the true and flawed nature of modern Texas masculinity.

The *Observer* used the same method of self-examination when it commented on a work by Simone Beauvoir in the following year. Beauvoir, in her work *America Day by Day* (1952), had written of the poverty she had witnessed among farm workers in Texas, an assessment that had been largely ignored in the state. The *Observer* once again took the opportunity to attack those in Texas society whom they believed to be apathetic to such socio-economic deprivation. The journalist 'G. H.' wrote: 'Perhaps our semi-illiterates who depend on the book clubs have been titillated by *Giant* and cannot be bothered by the findings of a French intellectual.'⁷⁴

In the 1950s, the dominant thrust of all cultural commentators in the Texas press, irrespective of political bent, was to uncover a fresh Texas reality and to encourage writers and film-makers to present a new and more realistic image to the world. The essential dynamic for doing this, for those in the liberal press, was to break the reactionary facade that surrounded Texas maleness and, ideally, uncover a reality that could more readily accommodate a liberal agenda. By most standards, apart from that which prevailed in Texas in the 1950s and early 1960s, the political demands of the *Observer* were mild. Despite being regularly accused by Texas conservatives of being a communist front newspaper, the liberalism of the *Observer* eschewed radical leftist politics. For example, Dugger rejected the programme of the Socialist Party –

S.D.F. in the 1960 presidential elections as having ‘a fobbing quality of gobble-de-gook.’⁷⁵ The paper was more likely to use pointed political humour and its version of liberal realism as tools for change than the adoption of a revolutionary leftist ideology. Dugger was enough of a political realist accurately to assess the success of rabid right-wing Texas politicians. On Congressman Martin Dies, he wrote:

Class him – to use his own words – ‘as a bigot, a reactionary, an old Southern boy just coming outta the woods.’ Be that as it may or may not, his name is magic at the Texas ballot box and he knows it.⁷⁶

Dugger, therefore, readily understood the power that male politicians such as Dies, Allan Shivers and Pappy O’Daniel, with their appeals to the baser political and racially-superior instincts of large sections of the white Texas electorate, had in the state. The *Observer* attempted to counter this with wit, humour and irony.

As an example of the use of politically relevant humour, an ad in the *Observer* in April 1961, complete with a picture of Rasputin and the tagline ‘DON’T BE HALF SAFE! IN THE SENATE RACE,’ told readers to write-in for candidate ‘GREGORY EFIMOVICH RASPUTIN.’ Ticks were placed alongside the following promises: ‘Tried and tested, a True Conservative . . . The anti-communist candidate . . . A WHITE Russian . . . A States-Rights Czarist. Pro-Landed Nobility . . . Won’t rock the boat, dead 43 years.’⁷⁷ The suggestion that an infamous Russian monk could readily fit into the profile demanded by a Texas political election tells us much about the *Observer*’s low opinion of the kind of white Texas manhood that was involved in the state’s political process. This was the manner of political maleness savagely described by J. Frank Dobie, the noted Texas writer and historian and friend of the

Observer, as being, ‘as much concerned with free intellectual enterprise as a razor-back sow would be with Keats “Ode to a Grecian Urn.”’⁷⁸

Ronnie Dugger, in a review of Lewis Nordyke’s *The Truth About Texas* (1957), offered a reason for the lack of vision evident in portrayals of the state. He suggested that ‘The long shadow of the stallion and the Stetson conceal us from ourselves as we wander from border to border, searching for symbols and telling jokes.’⁷⁹ Dugger is suggesting that the ways of traditional white Texas maleness, as outlined by Nordyke, with all of its supposed courage, strength, individualism and sense of purpose, has blinded Texans to the reality of life as it is played out around them. Dugger quoted the following lines from the book:

Texans are all one breed. First, they are Texans, and it’s hard to find one who isn’t proud of this fact. All of them are endowed with a sort of blind faith in the state . . . Texans talk, and they talk big. They think and dream big too. [In front of the Alamo] you see men walk up and quickly remove their big white hats.⁸⁰

Dugger commented on these remarks that:

We get the idea that the author is a kindly man . . . perhaps aware that that the corny image of Texans he broadcasts is out of focus, but not aware that it is also a focussing on the wrong century. We would add that this book is a pretty jovial mish-mash of balderdash for anybody who doesn’t take his reading seriously and dreams at night of being a Texas Ranger. One . . . wishes that Texas writers would give up trying to tell what Nordyke sets out to tell.⁸¹

The truth about Texas – and especially the kind of men who were widely revered in the state – was not, of course, a concept that was the preserve of either Nordyke or Dugger. However, by constantly posing the important questions that surrounded the uses of the white Texas male image, the *Observer* was endeavouring to keep the issue at the forefront of public consciousness.

Dugger, like many of his colleagues in this period, in both conservative and liberal newspapers, needed to know what Texas manhood really was like behind the mask of myth and cheap representation. This was the thrust of his review of George Fuermann's *The Reluctant Empire* (1957), the failings of which he believed were 'not dense enough to veil from view the people moving among these things, people who are not told about, people who are not understood simply by being acknowledged.'⁸² For the *Observer*, therefore, the series of myths surrounding white Texas maleness obscured the real lives of the unheralded in Texas. Within their particular version of reality, the liberals believed, lay the authentic heart of Texas maleness. If the magic of the myth could be challenged and then broken, the cult of praise for the powerful and individualistic in Texas society would lose its appeal. This, in turn, could create an environment in which those lives and ideas outside of the sphere of the ruling elite could be examined.

What this chapter has endeavoured to establish is the fact that the image of white Texas maleness increasingly became an issue for those in the liberal Texas press who were concerned with every aspect of the state's political process. Examinations of Texas society and of the manner of manhood that that society produced became commonplace in America in the late 1940s and 1950s. The Texas macho image became a front for all sorts of conservative political opportunists who embraced the

brash individualism associated with the stereotypical image of the state's manhood and adopted it as their own. It was this appropriation of the image that directed the energies of the state's liberal press toward an attempt to redefine the nature of the state and its maleness.

In its first ten years of existence, *The Texas Observer* was avidly concerned with the image of Texas. The evidence offered here also indicates that the newspaper saw the image of maleness in Texas as the state's most obvious icon. Despite its often-contemptuous attitude toward the image of the state offered in popular culture, it still believed that it was significant enough to have serious socio-political import. This dichotomy ensured that the dominant attitude of the *Observer* toward the image of Texas was one of healthy cynicism tinged with a zealous concern for the condition of Texas politics. Contained within its serious political agenda, the newspaper believed that the way that Texas and its manhood were portrayed had the potential to be an effective political device which greatly benefited those in the state whom they politically opposed.

The manner of white Texas maleness offered by American popular culture during this period is discussed elsewhere. What is important to understand with regard to the attitude of the *Texas Observer* is that it clearly understood that the image of Texas manhood played an important role in the state's political process. The newspaper kept up a constant tirade against the style and demeanour of conservative politicians, Establishment-oriented journalists, those in the film industry who were involved in the maintenance of the Texas macho myth, as well as writers who did not care to look beyond the superficial image of Texas.

It was predicable enough that the men that the *Observer* admired, such as Walter Prescott Webb, J. Frank Dobie, Ralph Yarborough and John Henry Faulk, were all

prominent Texas liberals. What these men also had in common, according to the *Observer*, was an ability to radiate a strong male persona that eschewed the strident materialistic outlook of the men who controlled the Texas political and socio-economic scene. It was this kind of white Texas maleness that the *Observer* chose to extol. The portrayals of the state in film or literature that the *Observer* lauded and encouraged were those that asked serious questions about the condition of Texas, and were not liable to fall into the trap of simple characterisation.

Like the *Emancipator* and the *Spectator* before it, a small but politically-aware readership read the *Observer*. The paucity of circulation, however, does not detract from the socio-political and cultural influence of the newspaper's viewpoint. This was a newspaper read in the main by the political makers and shakers in the Texas state capitol. The political influence of the *Observer* was, therefore, concentrated in the most important political environment in Texas and was all the more significant for that fact.

¹ The image of Texas millionaires and their place in society is dealt with in Joseph Leach, *The Typical Texan* and John Bainridge, *The Super Americans*. For a more profound analysis of the intrusion of the 'Big Rich' into Texas politics, see George Norris Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics* or Chandler Davidson, *Race and Class in Texas Politics*. Contemporary magazine and newspaper articles on the subject were legion. See, for example, Stanley Walker, 'Growing Legend of the Texas Millionaires,' *New York Times Magazine*, 8 March 1953; 'The Land of the Big Rich,' *Fortune*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (April 1948).

² The significance of the city of Dallas in Texas culture is discussed elsewhere in this thesis. However, for an insight into the growth of Dallas in the 1930s and 1940s, see Patricia Evridge Hill's, *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).

³ For details on the life of Granbery see www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles.com

⁴ *The Emancipator*, September 1938.

⁵ *The Emancipator*, August 1944.

⁶ *The Emancipator*, October 1944.

⁷ For examples of Dobie's contributions to the *Emancipator*, see the issues for June 1943, November 1944 and March 1945.

⁸ Films such as Jean Renoir's movie adaptation of George Sessions Perry's novel *Hold Autumn in Your Hand*, made as *The Southerner* (1945), and Jack Conway's *Boom Town* (1940) had the potential to delve a little deeper than most films of the 1940s into the socio-economic reality of Texas society, but failed to do so. Renoir's film, as its title suggests, became a generic Southern film, and the political controversy stimulated by *Boom Town* gave it a national context as opposed to a Texas one.

⁹ *The Emancipator*, July 1939.

¹⁰ *The Emancipator*, October 1941. Cheyney died while on a lecture tour of the Rio Grande Valley in 1941. His work includes the editorial collaboration with Jack Conroy, *Unrest* (1931), and *An Anthology of Revolutionary Poetry* (1929), which he edited with his wife, Lucia Trent. Trent later set up a Texas Poetry Day to fall each year on the anniversary of Cheyney's death.

¹¹ *The Emancipator*, September 1939.

¹² For an insight into Stevenson's career see Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics*, pp. 77-100. Although highly critical of Stevenson's Establishment links and his overt racism, Green did accept that Stevenson was less conservative when it came to his treatment of the Texas labour movement, especially the American Federation of Labor.

¹³ *The Emancipator*, May 1942.

¹⁴ See, for example, articles in the *Dallas Morning News* of 2 July 1941, 19 August 1941 and 3 April 1942.

¹⁵ *The Emancipator*, August 1946.

¹⁶ *The Emancipator*, May 1947.

¹⁷ J. Frank Dobie to J. R. Parten, 6 December 1946, DC. HRC. Parten replied sympathetically to Dobie, especially with regard to his precarious position at the University of Texas. On 7 March 1945, Parten wrote: 'I have always admired your courage, and recent events and your outspoken part in them has served by no means to lessen this appreciation.' Further letters of concern 'for the liberal cause' were sent by Parten to Dobie on 18 December 1946 and 22 February 1947, DC. HRC.

¹⁸ Walter Prescott Webb to Roy Bedichek, 3 June 1946; Owens, *Three Friends*, p. 222.

¹⁹ *The Texas Spectator*, 9 November 1945.

²⁰ *The Texas Spectator*, 1 March 1946.

²¹ *The Texas Spectator*, 1 March 1945.

²² For example, see the following articles in the *Spectator*: 'The Daily Press: Hearst in Texas,' 26 October 1945; 'Notes on the Freedom of the Press,' 21 December 1945; 'Who Paid for Pappy's Ad in the Houston Post?', 21 December 1945; 'The Daily Press and a Strike,' 24 March 1947; 'Fort Worth Press is a Homey Job,' 27 January 1947; 'Construing the Editorials,' 4 October 1946.

²³ *The Texas Spectator*, 26 July 1946.

²⁴ *The Texas Spectator*, 27 December 1946.

²⁵ *The Texas Spectator*, 27 December 1946. Stillwell occasionally wrote for the *Spectator*. *Border City* sought to assess the struggle of Mexicans to come to terms with white-dominated society in a border town.

²⁶ *The Texas Spectator*, 29 September 1947.

²⁷ *The Texas Spectator*, 21 July 1947.

²⁸ *The Texas Spectator*, 29 March 1948.

²⁹ *The Texas Spectator*, 22 March 1948.

³⁰ *The Texas Spectator*, 24 May 1948.

³¹ Ibid

³² See, for example, 'Giant of the Southwest,' *Newsweek*, Vol. xxxiii, No. 12, (21 March, 1949); 'Everything's True About Texas,' *Harper's Magazine*, Vol. 200, No. 1198 (March, 1950); 'Big Time in Houston,' *Fortune*, Vol. xxxix, No. 5, (May, 1949); 'King of the Wildcatters,' *Time*, Vol. LV, No. 7 (13 February 1950).

³³ Joseph Leach, *The Typical Texan*, p. 4.

³⁴ Don Graham, *Cowboys and Cadillacs*, p. 35.

³⁵ J. Frank Dobie, *A Vaquero of the Brush Country*, p. 27.

³⁶ *The Texas Observer*, 10 August 1955.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ As well as the films mentioned, Disney also produced *Davy Crockett and the River Pirates* (1956) and a number of television specials, the first three of which were *Davy Crockett*, *Indian Fighter* (1954); *Davy Crockett Goes to Congress* (1955) and *Davy Crockett at the Alamo* (1955). The Crockett craze spread across America and Europe in the mid-1950s and Davy's coonskin hat and other merchandise became widely popular. The song *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* was a massive hit in both the U.S. and Britain in three different versions, the most successful of which was by Billy Hayes.

⁴⁰ *The Texas Observer*, 12 October 1955.

⁴¹ *The Texas Observer*, 4 July 1955.

⁴² *The Texas Observer*, 14 November 1956.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ *The Texas Observer*, 5 February 1957.

⁴⁷ *The Texas Observer*, 14 November 1956.

⁴⁸ For an example of this, see the picture of Shivers in Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics*, p. 136.

⁴⁹ *The Texas Observer*, 9 November 1955.

⁵⁰ *The Texas Observer*, 9 August 1957.

⁵¹ The *Billboard* article is quoted in Peter Guralnick, *The Last Train to Memphis: The Rise of Elvis Presley* (London: Abacus Press, 1995), p. 183. It is also a testament to the strength of the idea of white Texas maleness in American film that the young Elvis Presley was sold to the American public in three

out of his first five movies as a Texan. These films were *Love Me Tender* (1956); *Loving You* (1957) and *Flaming Star* (1960).

⁵² *The Texas Observer*, 6 December 1957.

⁵³ Other examples of the *Observer*'s crusade for relevance in Texas literature include the following pieces: 'Houston Has People As well as Oil Kings,' *The Texas Observer*, 11 April 1955; 'Southwestern Novels: Our Writing Lacks Something – But What Is It?', *The Texas Observer*, 3 August 1955; 'On Certain Texas Potentialities,' *The Texas Observer*, 6 September 1957; 'Some Differing Views of Texas Letters,' *The Texas Observer*, 18 April 1958; 'Lone Star Culture,' *The Texas Observer*, 25 April 1958; 'Does Folklore Sap Literature?', *The Texas Observer*, 12 February 1960.

⁵⁴ *The Texas Observer*, 9 December 1960.

⁵⁵ *The Texas Observer*, 14 March 1956.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ *The Texas Observer*, 13 June 1955.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ *The Texas Observer*, 26 June 1957.

⁶⁰ John Steinbeck, *The Short Reign of Pippin IV* (London: Heinemann, 1957), p. 103.

⁶¹ *The Texas Observer*, 13 June 1955.

⁶² *The Texas Observer*, 27 October 1961.

⁶³ Between *The Lucky Texan* (1934) and *Rio Lobo* (1970), John Wayne appeared in fourteen Texas-based movies.

⁶⁴ *The Texas Observer*, 27 October 1961.

⁶⁵ *The Texas Observer*, 25 October 1957.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ *The Texas Observer*, 8 April 1960.

⁷¹ One example of an influential extremist organisations that the *Observer* tracked was J. Evetts Haley's Texans for America – an organisation which, the *Observer* reported, added the name of J. Frank Dobie to their blacklist, because in 1947 he had signed a *New York Times* ad appealing for the protection of the democratic rights of the Communist Party of America. *Texas Observer*, 17 November 1961. Those on the fringes that the *Observer* reported on included the following characters: Tom Reagan, San Antonio policeman and president of the Texas chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of White People; Myrtle Hance, the woman who wanted to stamp books in the San Antonio library with red (for subversive) warning markers; Philip Eubank, the national chairman of the Constitution Party who believed that Eisenhower was a 'border-line subversive.' *The Texas Observer*, 24 January 1955 and 11 April 1955.

⁷² *The Texas Observer*, 3 August 1962.

⁷³ *The Texas Observer*, 28 August 1956.

⁷⁴ *The Texas Observer*, 2 January 1957.

⁷⁵ *The Texas Observer*, 4 February 1960.

⁷⁶ *The Texas Observer*, 2 January 1957.

⁷⁷ *The Texas Observer*, 29 April 1961.

⁷⁸ *The Texas Observer*, 18 July 1958.

⁷⁹ *The Texas Observer*, 22 November 1957.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² *The Texas Observer*, 6 December 1957.

5. How Cultural Commentators Saw the White Texas Male in the Aftermath of Dallas

The Impact of the Assassination on the Image of White Texas Maleness

The assassination of John F. Kennedy by a Texan in Dallas, Texas, in November 1963 and the subsequent accession of another Texan, Lyndon Baines Johnson, to the Presidency represented an obvious watershed for the image of white Texas maleness. White Texas manhood had come to be the most obvious symbol of the state and now the status of the icon and the reasons for its prominence were being analysed in the shadow of a national tragedy of enormous proportions. Two of the major figures in twentieth-century American history, Lee Harvey Oswald and Johnson, both white Texas males, leapt to the forefront of America's consciousness in the aftermath of Kennedy's assassination. These men also represented perfectly the contrast between the powerful and the powerless in Texas male society. The general effect of this was significantly to increase the degree of negativity by which the image of white Texas masculinity was seen outside the borders of the state. It was also a key contributory factor in the development of the mood of cynicism which subsequently characterised a new breed of native-born Texas writers.

The events in Dallas allowed those sections of the Texas press which were deeply concerned with the socio-political influence of the Texas male image to express their discomfiture in the most profound and expressive terms. For the *Texas Observer*, for instance, the killing of Kennedy provided an opportunity to place responsibility for the death of the president at the door of those in Texas who had nurtured a culture of right-wing masculine bravado that made it not only possible but likely that such a

tragedy could occur in the state. The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to show the extent to which the image of Texas maleness as offered in popular culture was altered by the assassination and the subsequent political and cultural furore.

The most obvious casualty in the frenzy that followed the shooting of Kennedy was the image of Texas and, of course, of its men. In world and national newspapers and magazines the image of white Texas masculinity, based exclusively on those Texas men who had power or desired it, was dissected and analysed in a deeply negative way. Media focus on Texas and Dallas in the period following the assassination uncovered a series of previously less well-known examples of white Texas maleness that represented the extremes of the state's right-wing political culture. The prominence given to the views of individuals such as publisher Ted Dealey, millionaire and radio broadcaster H. L. Hunt and his prodigy, propagandist Dan Smoot, politicians Bruce Alger, Martin Dies, and rancher and writer J. Evetts Haley in such solemn, nationally-relevant circumstances created an image around powerful white Texas males that promoted this particular brand of Texas masculinity to a new level. The image of the right-wing Texan had been around for some time. Now, however, after 'Dallas,' it attained a fresh gravitas and would hereafter be etched in the American public's imagination with the creation of an environment that not only led to the brutally violent and untimely death of their President but also contributed to a strong if momentary sense of national fear and insecurity.

The post-Dallas mood of many Americans in late 1963 greatly influenced those writers and film-makers who would subsequently identify many of the ills of American society with the character of the white Texas male. White Texas manhood would be perceived for at least the next two decades with suspicion and paranoia.

The Image of the Men of Dallas and Texas in 1963

The notion that in 1963 Dallas was a 'city of hate' and that Texas was a state filled with right-wing homicidal fanatics became common currency in America following Kennedy's assassination. In his book *The Death of a President* (1967), William Manchester wrote of the city that 'a kind of fever lay over Dallas County. Mad things happened.'¹ Manchester referred to the collection of men who had constructed in the city a web of political, commercial and cultural extremes and who had made Dallas a place where the norms of political and cultural behaviour, as conducted in the majority of American cities, were irrelevant. Countless newspaper and magazine articles accusingly examined the psyche of both Texas and Dallas and the overwhelming conclusion was that some degree of responsibility for the assassination lay within the overtly masculine political culture of the state.²

All commentators, irrespective of political bias, sought reasons for the killing from within the city's political scene. The right expressed incredulity that an avowed 'Marxist' had killed Kennedy and yet culpability for the act was being laid at the door of Texas conservatism. J. Evetts Haley best articulated the outrage that came from the Texas right. He wrote:

evil is never stupid, never lazy, never apathetic. Its immediate design was to blame Dallas and the conservatives; its next was to seize upon America's grief and pervert it into a morbid sense of shame. Shame for what? Shame for having tolerated the diseased mind of Communism that had killed the President? Not at all!³

Similar indignation was articulated by the radio propagandist Dan Smoot and Texas politicians Martin Dies (who first came to prominence in 1938 as the first chair of HUAC) and Bruce Alger.⁴ For those accusers on the left, the presence in Dallas of extreme right-wing individuals and organisations, coupled with a totally dominant rightist mainstream political culture in the city as well as the traditional predilection for violence associated with white Texas maleness, made Dallas a place, more likely than any other in America, where Kennedy could be assassinated.

There was no doubt in the minds of many national commentators, for instance, that the Dallas Police Department was solely culpable in its failed attempts to ensure that Lee Harvey Oswald was brought to trial. At best, the DPD was perceived as being grossly incompetent and, at worst, guilty of the clumsiest collusion.⁵ Dallas became a city where bullish police officers and shady night-club owners were suspected of working together to ensure the same corrupt and deadly ends. Jack Ruby's lawyer, Melvin M. Belli, spoke suspiciously of his lack of confidence in what he called the 'Dallas Kremlin Oligarchy.' Following Ruby's death sentence for the shooting of Lee Oswald, Belli commented: 'Ruby is worried, and so am I, that they may slip somebody into his cell, another prisoner, with a shiv in order to prevent his appeal. They would make it appear as a suicide and this vicious city would have him off their hands.'⁶ Belli, of course, had his own agenda, but he also understood that the image of Dallas was so tarnished that he could use that negativity for the benefit of his client.

An article in *Newsweek* on 9 December 1963 was headed by a cartoon from a French newspaper in which three stone-faced male Dallas citizens, one of whom was a policeman, were perusing a 'TEXAS' sign. The name of the state was made up of a gallows for the T, guns made up the E, the X obliterated the Statue of Liberty, the A

formed the shape of a Ku Klux Klan hood, and the S was transformed into a dollar sign. Public comment from officials, such as that from U. S. District Court judge Sarah T. Hughes at a meeting of Latin-American editors at the Press Club in Dallas in April 1964, also helped to confirm in the minds of Americans the idea that Texas, and Dallas in particular, was a place apart. Hughes argued that: 'There was a climate of hate in Dallas that was not evident in any other place.'⁷ These examples serve to illustrate the overwhelmingly negative image of Dallas that was widespread in the U.S. in the period after the assassination.

In early 1963, the Dallas Citizens Council had employed the help of the Bloom Advertising Agency to help create an image of the city that would make Kennedy's impending visit comfortable and non-controversial. The incident a few weeks before, when liberal Adlai Stevenson (the Democratic candidate for the Presidency in 1952 and 1956) had been hit by a placard in Dallas, and the controversy back in 1960 after Lyndon Johnson and his wife had been spat upon in the city, had helped to create an image of Dallas which was bad for commerce. Helen Holmes, who ran the agency's PR division at that time, co-ordinated a public response to the visit which, she hoped, would see the city being viewed in a favourable light. She recalled: 'There were people who I'm sure wouldn't vote for him who were there waving flags standing twenty deep. We really felt like that we had reached the real Dallas.' Following the assassination and Ruby's murder of Oswald, Holmes believed that the damage was far too deep to repair in the short term. 'Dallas', according to Holmes, 'drew into itself, stunned to find that we weren't going to be allowed to grieve with the rest of the country.' The reason for the city's alienation from the rest of America lay not only in the murders of Oswald and Kennedy, but also in America's perception of the men who ran Dallas as rabid political extremists who had created a hate-filled and

murderous environment. Those who controlled the city of Dallas were, through commercial necessity, obliged to try to escape from this position in subsequent years.⁸

National apprehension about the character of white Texas manhood was increased by the fact that – after the Kennedy assassination – a Texan was the new incumbent in the White House. In the wake of the assassination, Texans were distinctly unpopular across America. John Tower, the Republican Texas senator, was forced to move his family out of his Washington home because of a series of obscene phone calls that blamed Texas for the killing.⁹

Lyndon Johnson was in many respects the archetypal Texan and many Americans were, therefore, understandably wary of having such a man in control of their country. Johnson had, of course, cultivated the Texas image as a political tool. Early in his Vice-Presidency, Johnson told Kennedy's press secretary, Pierre Salinger: 'Sell the Johnson image as one of a big, tall, tough Texan.'¹⁰ Unsurprisingly, Ronnie Dugger suggested that Johnson was 'living-out of the [Western] myth' and, in his book on Johnson, listed a series of ways by which Johnson manipulated for political advantage his Texas male persona, as well as pointing out the dangers involved in this pretence.¹¹ Fear about Johnson in the first few weeks of his presidency, therefore, from both within and outside the state, centred to a large degree on the fact that he was from Texas. The left-leaning *El Paso Labor Advocate*, for instance, optimistically listed Johnson's record on civil rights but preceded it with the comment 'although a Texan . . .'¹²

When the tide turned for Johnson among the American people, the *Dallas Morning News* reported his popularity in Texas-based terms. They wrote that Northern voters have eschewed 'distrust for him and his Texan background.'¹³ It was impossible for Johnson to conjure an image of himself that disregarded his Texas background. He

made no effort, therefore, to disguise his obvious white Texas male persona. On the contrary, the impression that he offered to the American people played heavily on his undoubted 'down home' Texas charms. Early in 1964 Johnson hosted a reception for visiting German diplomats at his Texas ranch. On this occasion he handed out Stetsons to his guests and fed them barbecue food whilst addressing them from a podium made up of two bales of hay, dressed in informal rancher's garb. Johnson was, therefore, from early in his Presidency, determined to cultivate an image redolent of his home state.¹⁴ This was, of course, a manufactured image, designed to offer to the American people an echo of a frontier past at a time in American history when what was needed were familiar images that could heal and reassure. Johnson, in fact, did not purchase the family ranch on the Pedernales River until 1951 and his credentials as an authentic rancher were highly questionable. An article in the *Journal of the West* in 1995 observed of Johnson that: 'While he was not a rancher in the true sense, he valued the land immensely.'¹⁵

Irrespective of the dubious authenticity of the image he now projected, Johnson inevitably came to be seen in the standard Texas male context by the national press. This is evident in the fact that cartoon representations of Johnson invariably drew heavily on his Texas credentials. Typical was the one in the *New York Times* in January 1964, which had Johnson leaning on a ranch rail, holding a rope while in the background was a snorting, corralled horse. On the corral fence was written 'Civil Rights Issue' and Johnson was saying 'still a mighty ornery critter.'¹⁶ Johnson also unashamedly played on his Texas background when acting as Commander-in-Chief during the early years of the Vietnam conflict. On one occasion he told a group of servicemen, untruthfully, that his 'great-great-grandfather died at the Alamo.'¹⁷ So dominant did this persona become that, when Johnson engaged in the electoral battle

of the 'Westerners' with Barry Goldwater of Arizona in 1964, it was the Texan who won the image battle hands down.

In the first year of Johnson's Presidency, the image of Texas began to be rehabilitated as the male paradigm went from being constantly castigated to once again attaining a degree of authority and respectability. This was, of course, only relevant to those Americans who wished Johnson well in the White House and were attracted by an image that played heavily on an overtly masculine model of America's past. For the many who did not wish Johnson well, his hackneyed Texas persona came increasingly to be seen as just a self-serving device designed to boost his popularity. For those on the Texas liberal left, as America's involvement in Vietnam grew more serious, the image confirmed previous fears regarding the political abuse of the frontier male persona. For the wider American left, the Texas image came to symbolise the propensity of the powerful and the established in their country to engage in unreasonably aggressive conduct. As we shall see, for a range of writers and film-makers as the 1960s progressed, the image of Texas maleness came to represent the dark reactionary underbelly of American life and, as a result, was attacked without mercy in cinema and literature.

When it came to Texas conservatives, Haley's above-mentioned attack on Johnson was typical of the hypocrisy of those on the right who wished to distance the hallowed image of the state from what they believed to be fakes, impostors and, more importantly, those whose political opinions were not deeply rooted in the soil of Texas conservatism. Texas conservatives firmly believed that the image rightly belonged to them and resented its appropriation by such politicians as Johnson, the image of whom in the early 1960s, according to Haley, was 'a national television joke.'¹⁸

Press Reaction

The most notable feature of the conservative press in Dallas following the assassination was its obsessive concentration on the image of the city. In the period from 22 November to the end of 1963, the *Dallas Morning News* published a total of twenty-two articles which dealt with how the city was perceived. The *Dallas Times-Herald* in the same period offered its readers twenty-one articles in the same vein. Although the majority of these pieces sought to defend Dallas, there was also an undeniable concern with attempting to understand why others would see the political culture of the city as pernicious.

The immediate reaction of the *Dallas Morning News*, which on the morning of Kennedy's visit had allowed a highly critical full-page ad to appear on its pages, was one of shock, confusion and reflection. A cartoon in the paper a few days after the killing featured an aged, Stetson-wearing Texas male, head bowed, an enormous tear at his eye, with a caption reading 'The Eyes of Texas.'¹⁹ An editorial soon after sought to place into context and to understand the diverse political views of Texans. It read: 'A sincere conservative can be just that – a sincere conservative – without being a Black shirt, and a sincere liberal can be a liberal without being a Red.'²⁰ The conciliatory tone of this piece, unusual for the *News*, is indicative of the humble, non-confrontational mood in Dallas in late 1963. It also points to the fact that the image of the state, at least in the immediate aftermath of the assassination, was of prime concern to the normally uncompromisingly conservative and rabidly anti-Communist *News* (a newspaper that, according to William Manchester, 'had made radical [conservative] extremism reputable in the early 1960s.')²¹

Lon Tinkle sought solace and strength in the glories of the past. The *Dallas Morning News* literary critic reviewed a book on the history of the American West two days after the killing. In his review, Tinkle wrote of: 'The toughness and bravery and sheer will to survive that energised men all the way from Cabeza de Vaca . . . to Kit Carson.'²² Tinkle's evocation of historical frontier maleness served as a defence of contemporary Texas maleness and as a reminder of the future potential of the men of Texas. His colleague John Rosenfield sought to reaffirm his sense of himself as an American and, in the process, reduce in importance the significance of his home state. He commented: 'Every citizen of the U.S.A should be, if he isn't, an American first, a regionalist second and a Republican or Democrat third.'²³ Rosenfield's defensiveness was understandable given the pressure on Texas cultural commentators such as he to deal with the tragedy in the months following the assassination.

Comment in the liberal *Texas Observer* following the killing railed bitterly and defensively against Texas characterisations and those who constructed them. As he had for the previous ten years, Ronnie Dugger laid the blame for the insidious culture of Dallas firmly at the feet of the conservative men who controlled the socio-political machinery of the city. In February 1964, he opened a melancholy and reflective article entitled 'A Letter from Texas' with the following plea: 'Let us be done with stereotypes, please. Let us be done with them . . . How can anyone honestly tell you what Texas is?'²⁴ The point of Dugger's piece was to offer an image of the state that was contrary to that being promoted across the world. This was a personal journey through the history, politics, geography and personalities of Texas that showed, in Dugger's view, that Texas and the men who formed the heart of the Texas image, deserved to be considered on a more profound level beyond the tired and banal characterisations that were attached to them. Dugger asked his readers to 'consider

the stereotypes about Texas against certain facts known to us who live here.²⁵ To this end he cited the examples of a series of liberal white Texas men: labour leaders, writers, social workers and politicians, all of whom, Dugger believed, contradicted the image of the state as a bastion of rightist politics. At the same time, however, the unprecedented post-Dallas criticisms of Texas caused commentators such as Dugger to wander ambivalently between disdain for the image or, alternately, reach for the security and symbolism that the traditional male icon symbolised.

In his analysis of the key components of white Texas manhood, Dugger wrote that in Texas, beyond all else, 'courage really is the question.' To make his point, he crossed the political line and cited as an example of white Texas male courage the conservative politician John Tower, whom he also described as 'worse than Goldwater and he seems like a throwback to a right-wing Utopia on an island out of Daddy Warbucks.' However, for Dugger, Tower's decision politically to challenge Lyndon Johnson represented a Texas trait of fighting against the odds which went back to the 'Alamo, grand old Sam Houston refusing to secede from the Union, Jim Hogg ramming the railroads with his own personal bulk.' Here, Dugger was evoking the blunt use of historical male stereotypes for cultural gain, a practise for which he had professed disdain in the previous decade. When a Texan sought strength and comfort, the obvious place to turn was the past and the obvious examples to cite were those of white Texas men and in this particular situation, in attempting to justify his positive view of his home state to his readers, Dugger required all of the strength he could muster.

Dugger was in no doubt that the assassination represented a seminal moment in the history of Texas. In its aftermath he believed that Texas should evolve in a way that eschewed the trappings of myth. He wrote: 'I would not have you think I claim there

is anything discrete or unique in things and people worth seeing and knowing in Texas. We do not need that or any kind of specialness in my state any more.'

Historian Joe B. Frantz made the same point as Dugger in an *Observer* article in May 1964. He posed the questions: 'Has the Texas myth ended? Or must we continue to fear the truth and shun the controversial?' An opportunity to do just that was possible, he believed, in the aftermath of the Kennedy assassination. Frantz wrote:

We did have an opportunity to take a new view of the charge that Texas is a land of vainglorious, blustering, vulgar, materialistic, illiberal clowns with more money than brains. The death of President Kennedy gave us a chance to drop our caricatured existence.²⁶

Apart from a passing mention of Katherine Anne Porter and Ladybird Johnson in this article, Dugger's vision of Texas was fully centred on masculine endeavour and the examples set by white Texas men. It was, of course, white Texas males who were under the microscope of world opinion and, therefore, it was not unreasonable of Dugger to attempt to redress the balance by citing a contrary vision that focussed on the positive qualities of white Texas maleness. A cartoon in *Newsweek* two weeks after the assassination, which showed a cowboy-booted and Stetsoned Johnson being examined by a collection of world leaders, illustrated the notion that the new president was being judged, in large part, on his credentials as a white Texas male. Dugger's intention, therefore, was to convince his readership that much of the manhood that emanated from his home state was essentially sane, reasonable and willing to engage with those outside the state in a civilised fashion.

In March 1964, Dugger again turned his attention to how the shooting had impacted on Texas. His piece 'Dallas, After All' set out to answer his own questions: 'How had it come to be true that a Democratic President could not come into this large, modern, wealthy American city without there being such unusual concern? Something was wrong. – What?'²⁷ His conclusion was reached by trawling through a history of the city and finding, predictably, that responsibility for the sense of paranoia that gripped Dallas in the run-up to Kennedy's visit was caused by the aggressive, male-dominated culture created by the city's business leaders and ultra-conservative politicians. This article articulated the hope that Dallas 'will not again be quite the kind of place it has been the last ten years.' Dugger's wish was that the new found 'humility' he sensed among the people of the city could translate into a new civic persona that would hasten social and political change. Chastened by the trauma of tragedy, the image of the Texans of Dallas could henceforth be one that downplayed macho posturing and incorporated a degree of liberal conscience.

These examples from the Texas press demonstrate that, in the aftermath of 'Dallas,' there was a sense of defensiveness in Texas cultural thinking which, for some, necessitated the placement of conventional thought on the back-burner and for others brought to the fore an assertion of those Texas qualities they had always promoted. Image, and in particular male image, was never far from the thoughts of those who sought to drag Texas into the future. However, at the same time as liberal Texas-based cultural commentators expressed concern about the image of Texas and its men, and wished passionately that the state could use the tragedy in Dallas as a platform to move forward culturally, socially and politically, there were others of the same broad political bent, both Texan and non-Texan, who saw in the image of Texas an opportunity to attack the key structures of American society.

Negative Literature of the 1960s



Disapproval and unease with the image of the male culture of Texas was also reflected in subsequent years by those film-makers and writers with a point to make regarding the condition of American society generally. The transference of dissatisfaction with Texas maleness to a more general critique of American manhood and of American society was not a difficult transition to make. The qualities of white Texas maleness had long been seen by some as being a politically-motivated representation of wider American manhood. Therefore, attacks on the freshly-wounded Texas male icon were a thinly veiled assault on what it symbolised in wider American terms. This became increasingly the case as America's involvement in Vietnam, under the leadership of the Texan in the White House, grew more socially divisive as the 1960s progressed.

One example of this is evident in the fact that many writers have consistently tapped into the notion that, in the early 1960s, Dallas was a place seething with odious and corrosive loathing for anyone who did not conform to the narrow socio-political and racial standards set and approved by the majority of Dallas' big business-oriented, white, male, conservative citizenry. Writers such as Don de Lillo in *Libra* (1988) and more recently, James Ellroy in *The Cold Six Thousand* (2001) have portrayed the city in an overwhelmingly negative light. Singled out for special attention in the latter work are the men who administered law enforcement in the city. Ellroy described the political leanings of the Dallas Police Department in 1963 in the following terms: 'Dallas PD was far right: Klan cliques [sic] and John Birch. Diverse splinter groups: The NSRP/the Minutemen/the Thunderbolt Legion.'²⁸ As will shortly be discussed,

writers with closer ties to Texas than de Lillo or Ellroy also found fertile ground in the notion that Dallas in the early 1960s was an essentially corrupt, money-dominated and overwhelmingly masculine culture.

Therefore, given the reality of the Texas image after 1963, the intention here will be to look closely at a selection of Texas-based films and novels in the decade following the assassination of Kennedy to see how the image of white Texas maleness was perceived in these cultural forms and to assess the influence of contemporary politically-charged, Texas-based events on such literary and cinematic representations of the men of the state.

Warren Leslie's *Dallas Public and Private* (1964) was the first book to attempt to understand the image of Dallas after the assassination. Unusually for a book on a Texas subject, Leslie's work gave a larger than normal proportion of its attention to the role of women in creating the culture of the city. Given the author's role in Dallas as a spokesman for the store Neiman-Marcus and as the hand behind that organisation's *Dallas Morning News* column 'Point of View', it was perhaps not surprising that Leslie should have declared a specialist knowledge and interest in the psyche of Dallas women. Leslie used the supposedly assertive image of women in the city simply to confirm the dominance of men in Dallas. The chapter 'The Compulsive Right-Wing Woman' sought to dissect the socio-political mores of those white, middle-class women of the city who engaged in determined, direct and reactionary political activity. Much of Leslie's work in this area, unsurprisingly for one employed for much of his life as an image-maker, was generalised and inconsequential nonsense. He wrote, for instance, in an attempt to explain why Dallas women were insecure, that 'it is not surprising that in emotional matters women are often angrier than men.'²⁹ His point here was to explain why many of the women of

Dallas attached themselves to the coat-tails of rightist political figures such as Joe McCarthy, Bruce Alger and General Edwin Walker. Leslie never suggested that the creation of a female political culture in Dallas was ever likely to threaten the dominant male culture of the city. It was rather, he maintained, an inevitable offshoot, where 'emotional' and 'insecure' female Dallasites could seek purpose in the shadow of a supremely dominant male culture.

Leslie believed that Dallas, although 'not nearly so black as the world's press has painted it,' was 'not innocent.'³⁰ He did, however, step carefully through the culpability of the Texas Establishment in the creation of an aggressive male image and an atmosphere that led to such a catastrophic result for the city and for the image of the men of Texas. The principal reason for this, according to A. C. Greene, the literary critic of the *Dallas Times-Herald*, was because of his long 'association' with the leader of the Dallas Citizen's Council, Bob Thornton.³¹ Lon Tinkle, Leslie's erstwhile colleague on the *News*, also noted Leslie's agreement with the proposition that those who controlled the city were fundamentally sound. Tinkle wrote: 'Leslie develops the primary thesis that the city's 'Establishment' remains a welcome image of excellence for most of the community because it has done a magnificent job in the domain of prosperity and material values.' Tinkle also noted Leslie's call for the evolution of the Citizen's Council to include 'moral, spiritual and intellectual leadership' to go along, and work hand in hand, with the predominant cash-orientated, macho influence of the ruling socio-economic elite.³²

Leslie concluded his book with a corroboration of his own status as a spokesman for the Dallas socio-economic elite. His message was one of guarded optimism, re-asserting his belief that Dallas society would continue to be male-dominated. Leslie

also warned of the debilitating effect on the city and its image if the powers that be declined to change. He wrote:

if the ingredients of success have been in its men, then the ingredients for excellence may well be in them and in their sons . . . Nothing has been solved in Dallas. Venal man continues to wrestle with his hero-structure, and more than half the time the dwarf wins out.³³

The primacy of commerce over moral considerations underpinned Leslie's problem with the power structure in the city. Fundamentally, however, Leslie, a New Yorker who had lived in Texas for seventeen years, had no problem with the image of white Texas maleness that he had to some degree, as an enthusiastic and professional promoter of Dallas' commercial interests, encouraged. Other out-of-state writers, however, were to see Texas as an altogether darker and more sinister place.

Vicious literary condemnations of the state, which, tellingly, centred on the condition and status of Texas maleness, became common in the 1960s. These included James Leo Herlihy's novel *Midnight Cowboy* (1965) and Norman Mailer's novel *Why Are We in Vietnam?* (1967). Herlihy's book tells the story of Joe Buck, an immature Houston dishwasher, who hooks blindly into a distorted perception of his Texas heritage and heads for New York to work as a gigolo. Joe's sense of himself as a Texas male and what that status represents in masculine terms is evident in the following passage in which he announces his arrival in New York:

Suddenly up ahead was the Manhattan skyline, buildings like markers in a crowded graveyard. Joe's hand moved to his crotch, and under his breath he

said, 'I'm gonna take hold o' this thing and I'm gonna swing it like a lasso and I'm gonna rope this whole fuckin' island.'³⁴

Joe Buck's idea of himself a heterosexual cowboy-stud is doomed to failure, despite an initial sexual encounter where his lover calls him 'Tex', and the reader is left in no doubt that the foundation of Texas maleness on which Joe had pinned his hopes of sexual dominance is fundamentally flawed. The remainder of his stay in the city is a spiralling downward and the antithesis of the experience expected of the standard Texas male stereotype. Joe is left to pick up the pieces of his shattered Western dream among the pimps, hustlers and customers of the city's homosexual street-scene. His presence amongst these people, and his salvation under the influence of the crippled runt Rico Rizzo, a man in every way distant from the Texas male ideal, is designed to reinforce Herlihy's point: that the Texas male icon is an illusion and dependence on it will lead to personal disaster.

In 1969, English-born director John Schlesinger made a film version of Herlihy's work. The film, starring Jon Voight as Joe Buck and Dustin Hoffman as Rico Rizzo, explored the same territory as the book with regard to the complexities of the male myth and how this impacted on white Texas maleness. As in the book, Texas in this film is a place to escape from. The maleness found there is portrayed as violently aggressive, in the case of Joe Buck's teenage friends who rape his girlfriend, or drunken and unreliable in the shape of his grandmother's cowboy lover, Woodsy Niles. Joe Buck in this cinematic context is portrayed as a victim. He falls victim to those image-makers who have created around white Texas masculinity an aura which, he believes, can transport him beyond his white working-class existence and touch areas of life that are otherwise beyond him. For Joe, the most important prize that

American society has to offer, and one that he is confident his status as a white Texas man can assure, are sexually-liberated Northern women who can both confirm the potency of the Texas male persona that he has adopted and, at the same time, provide economic sustenance.

The visual impact of the first fifteen minutes of the film is designed to be both intensely Texan and, at the same time, to show the potential hollowness of the Texas male persona. The first visual, accompanied by the sound of Indians whooping and gunshots being fired, is of a run-down movie drive-in named Big Tex. Joe Buck, the dishwasher, is then seen donning and posing in brand new Western-ware. The accompanying voiceover is of his co-workers asking why Joe's menial work has not been completed. Joe's response is to pose in front of his mirror and say manfully: 'You know what you can do with them dishes . . . and if you ain't man enough to it for yourself, I'd be happy to oblige . . . I really would.'³⁵ On his journey from the Big Springs Motel, armed with his cow-hide suitcase, Joe passes a derelict cinema, on the façade of which are the broken letters which, sometime in the past, made up 'JOHN WAYNE' and 'THE ALAMO.' On the journey to New York he hears on his radio women describing their idea of what constitutes a man. One woman responds: 'Gary Cooper, but he's dead.' Others say 'A Texas oilman . . . aggressive . . . outdoor type . . . young . . . YOU!'³⁶ On hearing this Joe whoops in delight, cowboy-style. Arriving in the city, the first item he pulls from his suitcase is a poster of Paul Newman's cinematic version of Hud Bannon. The bold Texas male persona that Joe Buck has adopted is, therefore, inextricably linked to the counterfeit and deceitful values personified in the Hollywood Western hero.

The juxtaposition of the independent Texas hero-image with that of the downtrodden worker is also telling. Joe's adopted demeanour is confirmed as

superficial when, in attempting to explain to the boss of the diner that he proposes to leave, he behaves in a manner that represents the antithesis of his earlier overtly masculine pose and is seen to be awkward, demeaned and subservient. This method of confirming that beyond the trappings of the boots, jeans and hat of the modern-day dime-store cowboy lies a deeply-flawed, socially-inadequate individual who, when faced with contemporary reality is liable to buckle, was also used a decade later in the film *Urban Cowboy* (1980). Joe Buck, like Bud Davis (John Travolta) in the latter film, hides his obvious personal frailties and class-based subservience behind an image constructed from Hollywood's unrealistic notion of Texas history. Both characters are polite and essentially decent. However, they are well aware of their place in modern Texas society and, as a result, are excruciatingly deferential to those in a position of power and authority. Strength, and escape from socio-economic reality, comes when they parade and pose in clothes that remind them of a mythical time when young, physically-able white men had some power in Texas society. ✓

As in Herlihy's book, the central tenet of Joe Buck's maleness in the film version of *Midnight Cowboy* is the question of his sexuality. Various scenarios are designed to undermine Joe's status as a straight-shooting heterosexual Texas male. He is even forced at one point to attempt to show himself from behind the Texas male façade and assert 'I ain't no real cowboy, but I am one helluva stud!'³⁷ Short of money, he allows a male student to perform oral sex on him. Then, when he finally finds an attractive, younger woman who is willing to pay for his sexual services, he becomes temporarily impotent. Nothing in the Texas-based images provided by John Wayne, Gary Cooper or Paul Newman conditions the viewer for any of these scenarios involving a white Texas male.

His relationship with Rizzo is a practical, dignified and ultimately honest friendship in which two victims of America's socio-economic inequality shelter each other from the ravages of failure. In this context, it is obvious that being white, male and Texan offers no respite from indiscriminate poverty. Joe Buck's Texas status, like Rizzo's Italian-American male persona, is seen to be powerless when faced with any aspect of competitive New York life, whether that is the bland conformity of working for a living or the corruption of the homosexual street scene. In New York, indeed, the Western image has been stained and most commonly denotes a type of street hustler/prostitute providing sexual services at the cheaper end of the market. The power of the image is, therefore, deliberately portrayed as being illusory and is seen to offer Joe nothing.

Why Are We in Vietnam? was arguably the most vicious literary condemnation of the status of Texas masculinity of the 1960s. Initially drawn to the strengths and weaknesses of white Texas masculinity through his close association with Texans during the Second World War, Mailer, in his 1948 work *The Naked and the Dead*, created the character of Sergeant Sam Croft, a cruel, fascistic, disciplinarian example of Texas masculinity, whose personality was explained in the following manner: 'He is that way because of the corruption-of-the-society. He is that way because the devil has claimed him for one of his own. It is because he is a Texan; it is because he has renounced God.'³⁸ Mailer constructed Croft, an expert killer who derived much satisfaction from his trade, in order to examine the kind of mentality it takes to motivate such an individual. Of course, Mailer's decision to make Croft a Texan was not arbitrary. The reputation of Texas men lent itself to a construction that emphasised the negative and the violent.

In *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, Mailer's analysis of the Texas male psyche was extended beyond the confines of the individual in order to place the pervasive influence of Texas masculinity in a national context. Generally thought of as a writer whose work is intensely masculine, Mailer examined in this novel the dire implications for America and its manhood if a path of war and capitalist corruption continued to be taken, and pointed in the most accusing fashion at the influence of white Texas maleness. This makes his book important to an understanding of how the enormous deluge of negativity aimed at Texas and its men could be transposed into a work of fiction.

The story centres on three Texans; the narrator, Randal 'DJ' Jethroe; Rusty Jethroe, DJ's father, a rich Dallas executive; and Tex Hyde, DJ's friend, who, two years previously, had travelled to Alaska (with its barren wastes representing a new Texas-style frontier) for a bear hunt. Texas itself in this instance represents the old American frontier, which has disappeared under the influence of corporate capitalism and the men, like Rusty, who have gleefully managed this change. Dallas, the part of Texas to which the group belongs, comes in for special attention. The motivation for the trip to Alaska is attributed to Texas arrogance, which breeds unrealistic and inevitably damaging over-confidence. As Mailer put it: 'that Texas will carries Texas cowards to places they never dreamed of being.'³⁹ The main protagonists represent a grotesquely twisted version of their Texas heritage, as well as that of 1960s American culture. Mailer incessantly pounds the concept of white Texas manhood with negative criticism. The cynicism includes those stalwart symbols of Texas history, the Alamo and the cowboy, but centres for the most part on the role in Texas of the modern-day white man who has within him 'the biological inheritance and trait transmissions of his ancestors.'⁴⁰

DJ is described by his mother's Jewish psychiatrist as follows:

He was recalcitrant, charming, gracious, anti-Semitic, morally anesthetized, and smouldering with presumptive violence, a host of incest, I mean incest fixes, murder configurations, suicide sets, disembowelment diagrams and diabolism designs . . . he's a humdinger of latent homosexual highly over-heterosexual with onanistic narcissistic and sodomistic overtones, a choir task force of libidinous cross-hybrid vectors.⁴¹

His friend, Tex, the son of an undertaker, is described as 'a mother-fucker' with a dubious bloodline mix of German and Indian. According to Mailer, moreover, the latter is not just ordinary Indian, but 'the sort of dirty vile polluted cesspool Eenyen blood like Mexican – you know just a touch of that Latin slicky shit in it, vicious as they come . . .'. His German ancestry is similarly castigated as 'the slimiest of red hot sexyass Nazis fucking each other, mating and breeding to produce Tex Hyde . . .'.⁴² All of this contributes to Mailer's deliberately highly negative construction of the white Texas male.

Rusty is described, in his guise as a corporate executive, as having 'a shit-licking propensity'. The same character, however, away from his urban environment and 'out in the woods' is depicted as follows: 'He's Texas ass, man, common as dirt, hard as nails, he could crack a clamshell with his asshole, rolls his prejudices around in his throat like a fat cricket in honey.'⁴³ Both environments, the corporate and the frontier, are offered as the natural habitat of modern Texas maleness. Each offers an outlet where the combative qualities of Texas manhood can thrive and prosper. The Texas males of Rusty's generation are similarly accused. The husbands of Dallas matrons,

‘all ex-hot rodders, hunters, cattlemen, oil riggers, corporation gears and insurance finks,’ are described in the following terms:

Every one of these bastards has the sexual peculiarities of red-blooded men, which is to say that one of them can’t come unless he’s squinting down a gunsight, and the other won’t produce unless his wife sticks a pistol up his ass – that man is of course a cop.⁴⁴

The purpose of Mailer’s frantic attack on white Texas masculinity was to address the titular question of why America was in Vietnam. His answer bluntly, was that the culture of white Texas male-dominated society was the reason behind America’s involvement in what he believed to be a senseless war in Vietnam. Texas, and its power-obsessed male culture, was, according to Mailer, the most obvious example of what was hideously wrong with America in the 1960s and, therefore, the blame for the war should lie fairly and squarely within the borders of the Lone Star state and, in particular, on the city of Dallas.

It was not only non-Texans such as Mailer who saw the need to question the status of white Texas maleness. Native Texas writers also sought to understand the mood of Dallas in 1963 and to employ their comprehension of the city’s new-found relevance as a critical backdrop in their key quest, which was to comprehend the changing face of white Texas masculinity. Brian Woolley’s *November 22* (1981) and Edwin ‘Bud’ Shrake’s *Strange Peaches* (1972) are examples of writers and work that placed an analysis of the city and of the men of Texas at the centre of their vision.

Using the backcloth of Dallas in 1963, Shrake deals with the trauma of a white Texas male coming to terms with himself and with the society that made him.

Shrake's fictionalised Dallas is once more a city strong on corruption and right-wing politics, all of which is controlled by a white male power structure. The hero of the piece is John Lee Wallace, the star of a TV cowboy show called *Six Guns Across Texas*. Wallace returns to Texas to make a movie about his home state which, he believes, 'would tell what the place was really about as we lived it, not the crap people were supposed to believe if they watched *Six Guns Across Texas*.'⁴⁵ The image of Texas and its manhood are, therefore, established early in the novel as a key contributory factor in the development of the central male character.

Wallace, a drug-abusing, womanising, ex-cowboy with friends and benefactors among a bizarre collection of the Dallas mega-rich and their underlings, is seeking insight into Texas in the expectation that it will help in his attempt to separate his own identity from that of the character he plays on screen. Wallace is a white Texas male literary character playing a white Texas male TV star. His need to escape from the latter role, and his understanding of the restrictions that the Texas male stereotype imposes on him, allowed Shrake the potential to develop the character in an unorthodox fashion and to undermine the kind of stereotypes that impede Wallace's personal progress. However, as befits a fictional son of Texas, Wallace finds that in order to deal with the present he must first confront the past. Aspects of Wallace's Texas past are offered by Shrake as alternative counter-points to the hedonistic life he leads. These include strictures on his religious upbringing and the realisation that he, like most others in Texas, has moved too quickly from the culture of the frontier to that of the second half of the twentieth-century. His understanding of this provides Wallace with threads of strength that allow him to place his own problems and those of contemporary white male-dominated Texas society in context.

Similarly stereotypical is Wallace's mode of escape. As a political liberal, he is trapped both by his political convictions and by his dependence on those who control the economics of the city and, therefore, his ability to express his real feelings about Texas on film. He escapes, therefore, to Mexico where, like many white Texas male characters before and since, he discovers an environment with the potential for personal development free of the restrictions imposed by those who control modern Texas society.

The series of events that drive Wallace out of Texas surround the 22 November assassination and how it impacted on his sense of himself as a Texas male. Dressed in cowboy garb and attempting to film the President, Wallace makes eye contact with Kennedy just prior to the shooting. His admiration for the President's movie star demeanour and Eastern style is in sharp contrast to his uncomfortable feelings toward his own sense of himself as a Texas male, as well as of the male stature of his fellow Texans. When the Kennedy motorcade has passed, Wallace decides: 'I didn't wait to film Lyndon Johnson or any of the others. To me they were just politicians, not great men, just part of the crowd the same as me . . .'⁴⁶ Wallace's anguish at the death of his hero, the antithesis of everything that the Texas male represented, prompts him to confront the kind of white Texas maleness he believes to be responsible for the killing. Despite the fact that it was a professed Marxist who killed Kennedy, Wallace sees the right-wing ethos of the state as being responsible for the cultural conditions that led to the shooting. He tells his friends: 'I'm going over to Turtle Creek and beat the hell out of the first right-wing bastard I see.'⁴⁷ This attempt at retribution fails and the failure further contributes to Wallace's sense of inadequacy as a white Texas man. His friend questions him: 'So much for frontier justice . . . We don't even hit back. What the hell has happened to us?'⁴⁸ His guilt at what he is in masculine terms, and

can not at this juncture escape, is exacerbated by the image of white Texas men being peddled by the world's press. He thinks:

Then those outside feelings of hate and fear began to overwhelm our own feelings of shock and anger and disgust with ourselves, and we became the receptacle for the guilt of all the world. We didn't want it, we couldn't stand it, and we couldn't refuse it.⁴⁹

White Texas manhood, therefore, in all its forms, even that of a personality such as Wallace, whose liberalism and uncertainty about his male identity is the antithesis of the standard Texas male ideal and is about to drive him away from his home state, is seen by those outside Texas to be culpable in the catastrophic events in Dallas in 1963.

Shrake's book is, however, a specific condemnation of the economically and politically powerful Texas male and of those, like Wallace, who fall within their sphere of influence. Wallace reflects the overtly negative view of Texas as seen from outside the state. Those men who inhabit Wallace's previous Texas existence and are powerless are characterised as subservient pawns in an inconsequential hinterland where folks are seemingly unaware of Wallace's version of Texas reality and are, therefore, loyal to Texas. For example, shortly after the killing, Wallace's father outlines his feelings regarding Dallas in the most pragmatic terms. He defends the city, saying:

You can't blame a whole town for what a crazy Communist did . . . Dallas is a real nice place. Your maw and I have had it good here, and we didn't have no

college education or rich relatives pulling for us. If you treat people right in Dallas, they'll treat you right. We've got this house all paid for, and plenty of food to eat, and I play golf on the same course with niggers, and I never shot a gun in my life.⁵⁰

Dallas in this context becomes the economic boom-town that attracted millions of rural Texans in the half-century prior to 1963 – millions whose sense of themselves as men was determined by their ability to work hard in menial jobs and to provide a degree of economic security for their families. Wallace, of course, inhabits a different world from his father with radically different priorities. By peddling himself as a standard Texas icon, he has raised his economic security to a level where he can afford to engage with abstract, drug-induced ideas surrounding his identity. It is his guilt at failing fully to engage with the world he has embraced, where money, power and influence can create an environment where good men can be killed, that drives him away from Texas. The inconsequential and emasculated nature of the image that he has created as a TV cowboy, evidenced in his own personal inability to engage in 'frontier justice', convinces him that in order to rediscover his maleness he must escape.

Shrake's criticism of the emasculating impact on white Texas maleness of the controlling forces in Texas society was shared by many of his Texas contemporaries in the 1960s and early 1970s. Peter Gent's grid-iron football novel *North Dallas Forty* (1973) and Billy Lee Brammer's political novel *The Gay Place* (1961) are just two further examples of books that accuse branches of the Texas Establishment of being contributing factors in the troubles of their white Texas male characters. The former novel focuses on the overtly masculine world of the National Football League.

Gent cites the troubled alliance of corporations, politicians and the communications networks as the users and abusers of the sportsmen who are heroes to millions of Texans. Gent, an ex-Dallas Cowboys professional, accuses the system, consisting of 'a new generation of Texans who want to do away with the rules',⁵¹ of 'lying, cheating, stealing and hypocrisy'.⁵² His key male character questions the masculine status of the men who are at the heart of the Dallas economic system in the following way:

It was always surprising to me to see respected businessmen who deal in millions of dollars and thousands of lives giggling like pubescent schoolgirls around a football player. I could never work out whether it was worship or fear.⁵³

The maleness projected by Gent and his football-playing characters is raw and uncomplicated. It is, however, ultimately defenceless against those men who control them economically. The powerbrokers of the Texas Establishment, on the other hand, are characterised as weak and unmanly in demeanour and physicality. By making this distinction, Gent was commenting on the demise of traditional maleness in Texas, which was being replaced by a more effete yet ruthlessly potent, money-driven masculinity.

During the summer of 1966, Texas once again found itself bathed in a national spotlight of negativity when ex-marine Charles Whitman opened fire on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin, killing and maiming until he was shot dead. Prior to this, Whitman had shot his mother in the back of the head and stabbed her in the chest, stabbed his wife three times in the chest, bludgeoned and shot the lady

receptionist at the UT Tower and shot two boys and their mother as he made his way to the top. This incident once again turned the attention of many Texas cultural commentators to an assessment of Texas society and the role of men within it. Whitman, a Floridian, was, ostensibly, a solid member of his local Austin community. His engagement with crass and casual violence was, arguably, due to a brain tumour that was found during his autopsy. That, however, could not stop sections of the American media once again seeking disapprovingly to analyse Texas and the kind of men it produced. Nor could it stop Texas cultural commentators from once again engaging with 'their' own faults.

The *Texas Observer* reacted to the Whitman shootings with the same kind of response that marked its analysis of the socio-political and cultural environment of Texas that it believed existed in the state prior to the Kennedy killing. Articles by Ronnie Dugger and Bill Helmer entitled 'Who Was Charles Whitman' and 'Blood-Soaked Textbooks,' and a contribution from Alfred Schild, a professor of physics at the University of Texas entitled 'Reflections on Texas and the Marine', took the investigation of this incident beyond the confines of Whitman's personality or illness and sought to cite Texas and the culture of violence in the state as being determining factors in the killings. The *Observer* also featured a cartoon which portrayed Governor Connally of Texas as a parrot repeating over and over the words, 'it could have happened anywhere.'⁵⁴ The Whitman incident was to influence many film-makers in subsequent years, with Peter Bogdanovich's *Targets* (1968) being the most relevant within the context of white Texas maleness and foreshadowing the director's later involvement with the movie version of Larry McMurtry's *The Last Picture Show* (1971).⁵⁵

McMurtry was a literary presence in the 1960s that was difficult to ignore. His work reflected his North Texas, white, middle-class, semi-ranching background. Like the Dobie, Webb and Haley generation, but even further removed from the legendary heroism and struggles of his forebears and free of the class-based, populist cutting edge to his political development that characterised the work of Dobie and Webb, McMurtry looked closely at the legacy of the Texas past as the key source of inspiration for his writing. His obvious dissatisfaction and sometime embarrassment with the excesses of his home state was, in the style of Dobie, expressed in terms that were largely apolitical or heavily masked in vague political metaphors. In his early work, Texas was offered in its stereotypical white male façade and the concerns of his male characters were the concerns of Dobie and Webb a generation removed. Unlike Texas writers such as Shrake, Gent and Brammer, McMurtry stayed close to the traditional anxieties that had afflicted the Texas literary world since the 1930s.

Terry Southern, on the other hand, saw the men of Texas in a radically different light. The author of the cult novels *Candy* (1964) and *The Magic Christian* (1959), Southern co-wrote the screenplay for Stanley Kubrick's film *Dr Strangelove; or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964). For this film he created the character of Major T. J. 'King' Kong (Slim Pickens) who is, arguably, the most obvious Texas male caricature in American cinema. Kong is a B-52 pilot who is charged with the mission of dropping a nuclear bomb on the Soviet Union. His overtly Texas demeanour, with a perfect Texas drawl, cowboy boots and Stetson, is used to convey a mix of Texas male resolve allied to American Cold War certainty that was, in the light of the recent events in Dallas, destined further to plunge the image of white Texas masculinity into disrepute. Despite the fact that some references to Dallas were omitted from the final script, the association of down-home

Texas manners with such grotesque extremism, best illustrated when Kong straddles the bomb bare-bronco style, waving his hat and yelling 'yee-haah' as it plummets toward Moscow, meant that the film represented an untimely reminder to America's cinema-going public of the association of Texas with blind, reactionary, male-inspired extremism.⁵⁶

Cinema's Reaction to the State of Texas in the Aftermath of 'Dallas'.

Like the writers Mailer and Herlihy, non-Texas film-makers were drawn to the conclusion that Texas and its manhood was the most obvious setting for all that was wrong with America. An icon of American masculinity for over a century, it seemed natural that, when the cultural atmosphere changed and American cinema offered a voice to counter-cultural and socio-political radicalism, that the criticism of a new generation of film-makers should fall most brutally on the idea of the Texas male.

The films chosen to illustrate how Hollywood saw white Texas masculinity in the decade after 'Dallas' are *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and *The Last Picture Show* (1971). Both of these films, like *Midnight Cowboy*, were nominated for Academy Awards in the Best Picture category. The two films also had a key input from Texans, with Robert Benton co-writing the screenplay for *Bonnie and Clyde* and Larry McMurtry being similarly involved in the transfer of his book *The Last Picture Show* to screen.

The major difference between the films of the 1950s and the films that will now be discussed is the change of social focus. The leading male characters in the later films are socio-economically disadvantaged Texas males. Clyde Barrow and Sonny Crawford are, like Joe Buck in *Midnight Cowboy*, portrayed as outsiders from the socio-economic elite. One is an ex-sharecropper criminal from the 1930s, one is an

adolescent boy locked in a small North Texas town in the 1950s, and one is a contemporary Texas dishwasher who moves to New York to seek his fortune as a cowboy gigolo. In these films, the main emphasis is on the vulnerability and weakness of white Texas males caused by their own perception of their place in society. The change of emphasis away from the all-powerful Texas male of the past is most obviously highlighted by the absence of sexual power. It was no coincidence that temporary impotence was a feature of all three films. The film-maker's desire to disarm the white Texas male was pointedly illustrated by the loss of the most basic of male functions. The reasons these film-makers sought to lessen the stature of white Texas maleness lay within their perception of the cinematic and societal status of the Texas male.

Bonnie and Clyde

The prime motivation of those who made *Bonnie and Clyde* was to investigate radically different cinematic techniques and to explore, via cinema, a new permissiveness in attitudes toward language, subject matter, sex and violence. The writers Robert Benton and David Newman, inspired by Francois Truffaut's *Jules et Jim* (1959), had originally offered the script to Truffaut and Jean Luc Godard, before Arthur Penn, himself a convert to the style and techniques of French 'New Wave' film-making, agreed to take it.⁵⁷

The motivation behind their thinking, and their priorities, can be perceived in an article written by the film's screenwriters, Robert Benton and David Newman. If Barrow and Parker were alive today, the two wrote:

they would be hip. Their values have become assimilated in much of our culture, not robbing banks and killing people, of course, but their style, their sexuality, their bravado, their delicacy, their cultivated arrogance, their narcissistic insecurity, their curious ambition have relevance to the way we live now . . . Of course, what makes them beautiful is that they didn't know it.⁵⁸

It could, of course, be argued that what really made Bonnie and Clyde interesting, especially in the cultural and political context of the 1960s, were the two factors that Newman and Benton specifically excluded, that is robbing banks and killing people. Beyond these superficial notions of style, narcissism and delicacy, what incorporated Barrow and Parker into 1960s society was their propensity for violence, a suggestion of sexual ambiguity and the vulnerability of their social status.

The emphasis on style is no disadvantage in an examination of those who sought to portray white Texas maleness in the late 1960s. Indeed, the pretension of the creators opens a window on how a new breed of film-makers saw and sought to employ the phenomenon of white Texas manhood. Unlike the melodramas of the 1950s in which working-class males had little or no voice, the characterisation of Clyde Barrow – stylised or not – in Penn's film allows him not only to speak, but to address the personal and social issues that concern him in an articulate manner – albeit in a manner that spoke from 1967 rather than 1934.

There is, therefore, an interaction between the aesthetic intention of the film-makers and what the characters represent in social, cultural and historical terms. Benton, a native-born Texan, purported to understand the social significance of the couple. He explained how he and Newman transferred the couple's Depression-era folk status to the political and cultural mood of the 60s:

Being an outlaw was a great thing to want to be, whether it was Clyde Barrow or Abbie Hoffman. All the stuff we wrote had to do with epater le bourgeois, shaking society up, saying to all the squares, ‘we don’t do that, man, we do our thing’.⁵⁹

Barrow was, therefore, given a character that denied what he was in terms of the Depression-era powerlessness of the white Texas male, but which played instead to the 1960s anti-social prejudices of the film-makers.

Barrow’s character as depicted in *Bonnie and Clyde* is grounded in the contemporary attitudes of the film-makers, and the film’s careful attention to period detail, which suggests that close attention to time and place was important, does not fully compensate for this. Right from the opening credits we are left in little doubt as to where these people come from and what period in America’s past they represent. Sepia photographs of the white Southern poor click onto centre screen. We are then presented with snapshots of Bonnie Parker (Faye Dunaway) and Clyde Barrow (Warren Beatty), accompanied by brief autobiographical details. The musical accompaniment to this is Rudy Vallee’s love song of the 30s, *Deep Night*, which further evokes a sense of period. Our introduction to the couple is, therefore, steeped in an assertion of class and region. This position is maintained throughout the film, with posters of Franklin D. Roosevelt, as a backdrop in occasional street scenes, being the most obvious tool in the construction of authentic period atmosphere. The newspaper from which Bonnie’s poem is read has the headline, ‘FARMERS ATTACK AAA POLICIES,’ which is a clear contemporary reference.⁶⁰ Despite these attempts at authenticity, Barrow becomes the voice and personification of those

whose socio-political priority was to rail against society with '60s style rather than '30s substance.

As important as a sense of time is a sense of place. Texas, therefore, as a source of masculine identity, becomes an important component of the film. The most obvious expression of this, as will be noted, is in the authority of Frank Hamer (Denver Pyle), a Texas Ranger. Texas also figures in the film's dialogue when the Barrow gang kidnap the fussy and overly polite Eugene Grizzard (Gene Wilder) and his fiancée, Velma Davis (Evans Evans). Texas becomes associated with the kind of male expression symbolised by the Barrow boys when Eugene states, 'I'm from Wisconsin originally . . . where the cheese comes from.' At which point Velma quickly adds, 'Oh, oh, but he just loves Texas now, don't you Eugene.'⁶¹ The obvious inference is that Velma, from her middle-class Texas perspective, believes that one way of engendering a sense of oneness with these tough Texas good old boys, is to tell them that her foppish boyfriend has a connection with them because he has fallen in love with their home state.

The voice of powerless white Texas maleness from the 1930s is seemingly heard in *Bonnie and Clyde* because the cultural mood of the '60s was conducive to angry expression from those on society's margins. From the cinematic bias of the previous decade in Texas-based movies that (rich is relevant, poor is anonymous), many film-makers in the 60s moved to the opposite position of rich is corrupt, poor is hip. This was especially the case with regard to the portrayal of those who had failed to tap into the materialism on offer in American society and had railed aggressively against their exclusion. At a time when America was at war under the leadership of the Texan in the White House and violence was a nightly presence on the nation's TV screens, it was thought legitimate by some film-makers to express excessive violence on behalf

of those in American society who had no power; and what better vehicle for this alternative violence against a system controlled by a powerful Texan than that perpetrated by a powerless one. However, few film-makers in the '60s were content to bring to the screen unadorned expressions of poverty and its consequences. Those who made *Bonnie and Clyde* appropriated working-class disaffection and violence and moulded it into a stylistic model that reflected both modern-day middle-class angst and the softening influence of style-centred, bourgeois cinematic chic.

The most illuminating interaction in *Bonnie and Clyde* is between Clyde Barrow and his nemesis, Texas Ranger Frank Hamer. Barrow, the lawbreaker and social rebel, is represented in a sympathetic manner while Hamer, the representative of law and order, is portrayed in an overtly negative light. Early in the film, Barrow shows where his socio-political sympathies lie. While showing off his gun skills to Bonnie outside an abandoned farmhouse, he is disturbed by the ex-owners of the place, the Harris family, who have been evicted by the 'Midlothian City Bank'. The family resemble the Joad clan from John Steinbeck's book, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), and are clearly about to leave Texas for a more secure existence elsewhere. Barrow allows these victims of corporate capital an opportunity to make a symbolic, if futile, gesture by firing off the gun at the empty home. His sense of oneness with the plight of these people even stretches to a racial dimension, when Barrow hands the gun, and the power that it symbolises, to the black help, Davis.

This kind of action is at the root of the couple's status as folk heroes and is openly exploited by the film-makers. Later in the film when the couple, seriously wounded, drive into a Hooverville-type camp, they are accorded an almost Christ-like reverence from the assembled poor. One man reaches forward and touches Clyde, as if to confirm that he is in fact real and has come among them. Another poor farmer, a

witness at one of their robberies, is allowed to keep his money, and attests to the waiting press: 'All's I can say is, they did right by me, and I'm bringing me a mess of flowers to their funeral.'⁶²

Hamer, on the other hand, is seen to represent moneyed interests and the authority of the state of Texas. When captured by the Barrow Gang, Clyde Barrow angrily accuses Hamer of not doing his job properly, and of simply seeking bank reward money, and that instead of chasing people like them he should be 'protecting the rights of the poor folks.' He goes on to say: 'Down in Duncanville last year poor farmers kept you laws away from us with shotguns. You're supposed to be protecting them from us and they're protecting us from you. That don't make sense, do it?'⁶³ The gang humiliate Hamer by taking their picture with him and sending it to the press. They recognise his weakness in being alone and so far from Texas, separated from his power base and source of authority. Hamer's response throughout is one of measured silence. His contempt for characters such as the Barrow boys, and their women, is so deep that it requires no articulation. This underlines the deep schism in white Texas society between those who have made their way through the system and fight to maintain their advantage by any means, and those who struggle on the periphery.

Perceptions of class within white Texas society lead directly to Bonnie and Clyde's death. Their betrayal at the hands of Ivan Moss (Dub Taylor) is prompted by his contempt for their class status. He berates his son C.W. Moss (Michael J. Pollard) over his association with the pair. He says of Bonnie: 'She ain't nothin' but cheap-trash herself.'⁶⁴ Class and social perception of self, therefore, even within the barely perceptible change of status between old-man Moss and the Barrow boys, is important. Ivan Moss represents those on the poor side of the social divide who may

still feel that progress within the system is attainable or, even if it is not, have no sympathy for those who challenge authority. Their loyalty, therefore, is to those in society, like Hamer, who represent the power elite and the only path to socio-economic security or acceptance, rather than to men like Clyde Barrow, who represent the anarchic Texas past.

Hamer's masculine persona is that expected of the stereotypical strong and silent Texas hero. If Parker and Barrow had reached folk hero status in and around the small towns of East Texas in the '30s, then the Texas Rangers, and what they had come to represent in terms of law and order, were a national phenomenon by the 1960s. They were also the clearest and most accurate representation of white Texas men with power. In this case, however, the Rangers, personified in Hamer, are portrayed as the bad guys. Hamer is seen to be vengeful and dishonest. His methods of obtaining information do not display the characteristics of a respected Texas icon. He tricks the blind Blanche Barrow (Estelle Parsons) into giving him the details of C. W. Moss and he schemes furtively with Ivan Moss to ensure the ambush and subsequent death of Parker and Barrow. None of this behaviour smacks of the heroic. Indeed, in the final ambush scene where Bonnie and Clyde are peppered with bullets and slaughtered, Hamer and his deputies are in no danger, well-ensconced as they are, safe behind the security of lush Louisiana foliage.

In previous cinematic portrayals of men such as the humourless Hamer, no quarter was ever given to those they believed to be standing in the way of their notion of progress. Texas characters played by John Wayne or Audie Murphy could kill their way through large sections of white Texas with impunity, as long as they were seen to promote the interests of those with power. Of course, previously, the sympathy of the film-maker and the audience was typically with the lawman; in large measure

because those on the other side of the law had little or no authentic voice. This is not the case with Hamer or the Barrows. The society created by white Texas men – the society that Hamer is paid to protect – is being challenged by the film-makers.

Hamer, the hero deified by Webb in the 1930s, now becomes synonymous with all that is perceived by the film-makers to be wrong with American society.

In order to make this point, it needed to be made clear that the violence that Hamer plans and executes is different from the violence of Parker and Barrow. His is the violence that had, by 1967, permeated the homes of America through TV coverage of the Vietnam War, the treatment of civil rights activists across the South, as well as the beatings handed out to rioters in the urban disturbances that spread across the country during the summers of 1965, '66 and '67. This is the violence of empowerment: the violence that confirms the control of society by some elements over those who would challenge it.

Factual historical evidence, of course, suggests that the real Hamer actively, and at great cost to himself, took a stance against corruption, most notably that perpetrated by the Texas Bankers' Association. However, the outlook of the film-makers was so strongly set against the standard version of white Texas maleness that historical accuracy was not going to stand in the way of deliberate disparagement. The portrayal of Frank Hamer and what he was thought to represent was overtly negative, so much so that in 1968 his family filed a suit for defamation against the producers of *Bonnie and Clyde*.⁶⁵ Nor was the historical truth surrounding the life of Parker and Barrow seen as any kind of impediment to the chosen tone of the film.

The burdening of working-class men with a propensity for violence usually serves to reinforce stereotypical notions. However, in *Bonnie and Clyde*, Clyde Barrow is, at least initially, portrayed as a reluctant participant in violence. It comes as a surprise

to Clyde when reality filters into his worldview, and crude, physical violence upsets his naive vision of what it takes to succeed in a life of crime. His casual, good-natured robbery of a grocery store is interrupted by a large butcher wielding a meat cleaver. Clyde is cornered into violence and he strikes his assailant on the head with the butt of his pistol. Clearly shaken and exhibiting a mix of incredulity and moral indignation, he declares: 'He tried to kill me! Why'd he try to kill me? I didn't want to hurt him!'⁶⁶ The suggestion here is that those in society with something to protect are more geared to a violent response than those with nothing. And the inference is, given the sympathetic portrayal of his vulnerability, that Clyde is justified in engaging in violence, if only as a form of self-preservation. This could be construed as suggesting, on the part of the film-makers, that the law-abiding values of white Texas maleness as represented by the butcher are being sacrificed in order that empathy is demonstrated for the law-breaker. The revision of the role of the Texas Rangers in *Bonnie and Clyde* is consistent with this deconstruction of both versions – powerful and powerless – of white Texas maleness. To that end, the behavioural patterns and values of white Texas men are constantly challenged throughout the film.

For most of the movie, Clyde fails to consummate his relationship with Bonnie, despite acting, initially, in a sexually provocative manner. Bonnie refers to his problem in the following manner: 'Your advertisin' is just dandy. Folks would never know you don't have a thing to sell.'⁶⁷ She is clearly a pent-up sexual animal, from her first scene in the movie, in which her red sensuous lips pout into the camera, followed by her nakedness, and her seductive stroking of the barrel of Clyde's gun. This is a woman who demands, as a prerequisite, a masculinity of the most basic order. This immediately puts pressure on Clyde to conform to her basic needs – needs, Clyde assures her, she can have satisfied on 'any damn corner in town.' The

masculinity that he believes he has to offer transcends the basic physical and sexual qualities of manhood. Bonnie disagrees and says so. She tells Clyde: 'You're just like your brother . . . ignorant, uneducated hillbilly, except the only special thing about you is your peculiar ideas about love-makin' . . . which is no love makin' at all'.⁶⁸

Therefore, much of what is lacking in Clyde's life is portrayed as being sexual as much as social. His desire to achieve the status he believes should be his by right, as a white man in a patriarchal society dominated by his race, can be seen when he tells Bonnie of the kind of manhood her current social position will attract:

And them truck drivers come in there to eat your greasy burgers and they kid ya, and you'd kid 'em back. But they're stupid and dumb boys, with the big ol' tattoos on 'em, and you don't like it. And they ask you on dates, and sometimes you go but mostly you don't because all they're ever tryin' to do is get in your pants whether you want them to or not. So you go home and sit in your room and you think, 'Now when and how am I ever gonna get away from this?' And now you know.⁶⁹

His need cleverly to articulate her predicament is an attempt to best her and, therefore, to create a version of maleness that will mask his doubtful sexuality. In this cinematic context, Bonnie is always likely to dominate Clyde because an essential part of his characterisation is his obvious lack of a powerful heterosexual drive, which gives her the edge in their personal interaction. This contrasts with most contemporary reports of the pair in the Texas press, which offered Barrow as the dominant force. The filmmakers consciously, therefore, made the point that this example of white Texas

manhood should be seen to be inadequate in the most basic of masculine functions.

This is further intended to demonstrate the frailties of white Texas maleness.

The difficulties confronting Clyde in his attempts to assert himself in his relationship with Bonnie and in society are considerable. That said, the above quote tells us that he clearly sees himself as something better than the run-of-the-mill working-class men with whom he competes for Bonnie. Clyde's only method of justifying his inflated self-perception is to engage in crimes against the society that conspires to maintain his lowly status and that course of action, according to the film-makers, necessitates violence. It is not violence that directly cures his impotence, it is his craving for status. After Bonnie relates her poem as told in the press, Clyde states:

You know what you done there you told my story you told my whole story right there, right there. One time I told you I was gonna make you somebody. That's what you done for me. You made me somebody they're gonna remember.⁷⁰

This rise in his status is enough to bring Clyde to full and effective sexual manliness and makes it possible for him finally to consummate his relationship with Bonnie.

Sex is also used as a method of distinguishing the different characters of Hamer and Barrow. Hamer's only reaction during his brief period of capture comes when Bonnie, after seductively teasing his moustache with her gun, kisses him full on the mouth. Hamer spits hard and violently into Bonnie's face, his own face contorted with disgust. Barrow responds furiously to this slight, dragging the handcuffed Hamer into a lake and trying to drown him. The reaction of both men underlines how some American films of the '60s perceived different types of white Texas men.

Hamer's violent reaction confirms his belief that his inherent individualism and physical person should not be breached, least of all by a woman, especially by a woman like Bonnie. The kiss constitutes an attack on his status and his reaction represents further confirmation of his conservative, one-dimensional worldview. The standard male Texas cinematic icon was not identified with an overtly sexual or promiscuous attitude to women. If we look at the male persona of John Wayne, for example, in some of the most notable characterisations of the Texas male, we can see that this is so. In *Red River* (1948), *Rio Grande* (1950) and *The Searchers* (1956), Wayne's characters lose women because of their ideals. Although they are seen to suffer emotionally because of their choice, the ambition and destiny of these Texas characters transcends ordinary gender relationships.

The most important inference to be taken from the large degree of ambiguity surrounding Clyde's sexuality is that the makers of *Bonnie and Clyde* – like those of *Midnight Cowboy* two years later – are making a less-than-subtle point regarding the emasculation of Texas manhood in the hostile post-Dallas environment of the mid-to late 1960s. In the original version of the script, Benton and Newman leant heavily on the possibility that Clyde was a homosexual. Director Arthur Penn, however, encouraged a move away from this idea on the grounds that such a relationship was out of place among poor Texans of the '30s. He stated: 'That sexual menage a trois struck me as both too sophisticated and, even if true, divergent from the direction I felt the film should go . . . they certainly did not seem to me figures that belonged in complicated sexual arrangements.'⁷¹ It could be argued that, in making this choice, Penn was being dismissive or patronising with regard to the intricacies of the lives of the Texas poor in the 1930s. An overt homosexual emphasis might, of course, have diverted attention from the socio-political bias that Penn required. However, the

director's decision to discard a homosexual theme, which could have increased the film's ability to shock, confirmed the strength of the socio-political point being made. Far from narrowing working-class experience, the decision allowed the film to centre on the essence of Texas life in the 1930s: its socio-economic imbalance and the lack of identity offered to those without economic clout. This focus also fitted easily with the radicalism of the 1960s and with the need of film-makers, in a socio-political and cultural environment in which Texas and the men who most obviously represented it were characteristic of the reactionary and violent face of America, to undermine the potency of the filmic image of the white Texas male.

Much of the attention given by cinema critics in the Texas press to *Bonnie and Clyde* highlighted the film's worth as an aesthetic endeavour. George Christian in the *Houston Post* called it a 'sophisticated little movie'.⁷² Gerald Ashford of the *San Antonio Express* wrote: 'The picture is a brilliantly directed and convincingly acted story.'⁷³ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* critic Perry Stewart wrote that it was 'a stunningly brutal, yet strangely compelling film.'⁷⁴ However, alongside this attention to the quality of the film was a serious attempt by many reviewers to address the historical and socio-political content of *Bonnie and Clyde*. Christian expressed the dilemma of some reviewers with regard to the historical accuracy of the story. He wrote: 'The film hints at the sympathy of Bonnie and Clyde (I have no idea of whether or not it truly existed) for the common folks against the banks. In the manner of Jesse James v. the railroad . . .'⁷⁵ Christian's ambiguity over the issue of historical accuracy was less obvious in the work of other critics. Renee Covington, for instance, writing for the *Austin American-Statesman*, saw the film as telling of 'an era when crime was a way to announce, to record yourself.' The film also, according to Covington, had 'something to say about that violence and its relation to the society

that spawned it.' She wrote of Barrow and Parker that they were 'a pair of sick kids, both born in stifling poverty . . . who figured to become some bodies by robbing banks.' Covington's review was the only one that hinted at a liberal response to the portrayal of criminals, including as it did a sympathetic reference to the social conditions that the pair grew up in.⁷⁶

Doubts regarding the status of Parker and Barrow were expressed by Gerald Ashford who argued that: 'The story in no way glorifies the outlaws but in fact brings out the ridiculous as well as the tragic nature of their pretensions, and the pathos of the Depression-stricken farmers who in some cases swallowed these claims.'⁷⁷ Elston Brooks of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* was similarly dismissive of any notion that the pair represented anything beyond the paucity of learning in their background. He believed that the portrayal of the pair saw them as 'ignorant country hicks, unmistakable white trash who soon began believing that they were Robin Hoods . . .',⁷⁸

The most damning critique of the pair's status as social victims came in William A. Payne's review in the *Dallas Morning News*. No analysis of the film as a work of entertainment or of cinematic endeavour was offered by Payne. Instead, he concentrated in his review on an absolute expression of anger and disgust that such a film could be made. He wrote: 'Barrow and Parker were a couple of rat punks who created terror in a vast area simply because they had no hesitation in gunning down those who stood in their way.' The reviewer continued in the same strident vein before concluding in the following manner: 'There is nothing entertaining about mad dogs; they should be killed – and quickly.'⁷⁹ This kind of venom, in what was ostensibly the entertainment section of his newspaper, showed that there was in 1967

a significant degree of socio-political awareness of the dangers posed by men such as Barrow among cultural commentators in the state.

The Last Picture Show

Peter Bogdanovich's *The Last Picture Show* (1971) is yet another example of how societal issues helped determine a film-maker's perception of white Texas masculinity. The main thematic thrust of the film, as the title suggests, centres on the changing values of Texas society and the end of an era in which a run-down cinema, and the images it projected, represented the values of community and of the state's past. Bogdanovich claimed not to be a political animal. For him, the relationship between cinema and society was summed up in his attitude to his first film, *Targets* (1968), when he said: '*Targets* did not explain, nor did it mean to explain anything.'⁸⁰ In this context, the image offered by Bogdanovich was designed to address the confusion between the fantasies offered in film and the realities of everyday life. Larry McMurtry, who wrote the novel and co-wrote the screenplay, related his view of the priorities of Bogdanovich as follows: 'those non-Texans who involve themselves with moviemaking have, at best, only a formal interest in what one might call real life – their profound interest was in moviemaking.'⁸¹ Thomas J. Harris contended that, while the film is indeed a commentary on American society, it is only this in as far as it deals with American cinema. He wrote:

He [Bogdanovich] simply desired to entertain us in the manner of the veteran directors he admired, with films he hoped would evidence the same spirit. For that reason I see no cause to judge *The Last Picture Show*. . . as a treatise on

the decline of American society in the 1950s per se, but rather only with regard to how that decline relates to the American cinema and its history.⁸²

Bogdanovich's supposed rejection of the impact of the world around him apart, everything about *The Last Picture Show* points to the movie as being as effective a piece of social commentary as American cinema produced in the period. A brief survey of the socio-economic inequalities that the film exposes, and the reasons for them, might indeed suggest that this work represents a profound social statement. As in the great majority of social comment surrounding the state of Texas, the vehicle for this statement lies in the film's representation of maleness.

The movie is set in and around the fictional small North Texas town of Anarene in the early 1950s. The story centres on the coming of age of two friends, Sonny Crawford (Timothy Bottoms) and Duane Jackson (Jeff Bridges) and the various relationships that guide or hinder their path to manhood. The environment, shot in stark black and white, and the range of human relationships contained within the movie, are a bleak testimony to the critical belief that this particular section of rural Texas society has failed to prosper in any significant way. Charlotte Phelan, writing for the *Houston Post*, stated in her review that the film said much about its Texas setting and the character of those who lived there. She wrote:

The somehow relentless hopelessness of life in the bleak, remote, sand-battered, the utterly pitiful little North Texas town . . . is poignant beyond words. A kind of defeatism – or maybe it is merely indolence – is as indigenous as the scrawny mesquites on its outskirts.⁸³

The cinematography of Robert Surtees offers constant pictorial evidence of a society in crisis. The opening shot is of a cold, windy and empty Texas street, in which a barely operable 1941 Chevrolet pick-up truck coughs its way toward a dusty run-down pool hall. From this point, to the camera's final dwelling on the town's abandoned picture house on the same windswept street, the mood is unstintingly bleak.

The first snatch of human contact in the film comes when the driver of the Chevrolet, Sonny Crawford observes, through broken glass, his young friend Billy (Sam Bottoms), aimlessly sweeping down the middle of the main street. The last finds Sonny staring into space, tentatively holding the hand of his emotionally-drained, middle-aged lover, Ruth Popper (Cloris Leachman). From first to last, therefore, we are offered a series of ambiguous human relationships that bear testimony to the film's fragmented sense of humanity. Using this backdrop of a society in stasis, the film focuses on the effect that the societal malaise has on the masculinity on offer.

The screenplay for the film was written by Bogdanovich and Larry McMurtry from the latter's novel of the same name. Previously, Bogdanovich had been known primarily as a film writer/critic, writing seminal pieces on the work of, among others, the great Western directors Howard Hawks and John Ford. *The Last Picture Show* was only his second directorial experience and it was also the first time that he had set foot in Texas.

Bogdanovich, a New Yorker, believed that the perception he was bringing to Texas was better for being unsullied by actual hands-on experience. This, he says with hindsight, was advantageous: 'It was precisely that fresh eye that enabled me to

see things, to emphasize things that maybe wouldn't have been emphasized if I'd grown up there.'⁸⁴ When first given the novel to read by his friend Sal Mineo, Bogdanovich's initial reaction reportedly betrayed a New Yorker's ignorance about the Lone Star state: 'This thing's all about Texans. I don't know anything about these people.'⁸⁵ The director, therefore, felt the need to create an authentic Texan 'feel' and to convince Texans that his creation was valid. He said: 'Texans really thought I'd captured their state. It was shot in Texas, the writer was from Texas, and almost all the actors, except the leads, were from Texas. Ben Johnson was from Oklahoma, which was close.'⁸⁶

Bogdanovich was almost certainly influenced by his admiration for the films of John Ford and Howard Hawks, both of whom played a key role in the creation of the Texas male icon in cinema. We also know that Bogdanovich's perception of Texas and its manhood was influenced by the Whitman killings at the University of Texas in 1966. Therefore, despite having never been on Texas soil, Bogdanovich already had preconceived ideas concerning the nature of the state from a variety of specific cinematic and social sources.

His admiration for Hawks, for instance, allowed him to change, from the book version, the final film shown at the Anarene Royal. In the novel McMurtry had the final movie screening as Audie Murphy's, *The Kid From Texas* (1950), and described the experience as follows:

somehow the occasion just didn't work out. Audie Murphy was a scrapper as usual, but it didn't help. It would have taken Winchester '73 or Red River or some big movie like that to have crowded out the memories the boys kept having.⁸⁷

Bogdanovich felt compelled to shift the final movie away from the B-movie status of Murphy's film and go for the Howard Hawks classic, *Red River* (1948), starring John Wayne. The change is, in itself, an indication of the direction that Bogdanovich wished to take with regard to his characterisation of Texas. There is, of course, a world of difference in the stature of the two movies, not least in the masculine persona and significance of the respective male leads. *Red River* is perhaps the most obvious reminder of what white Texas maleness represented in cinematic terms, the film being one of the best examples of the mythic historical status that was previously attached to Texas men. The juxtaposition of this kind of masculinity, in this film within a film, with the characters of *The Last Picture Show*, is hardly accidental. The men in both films inhabit the same physical landscape, but their social environment and attitude to life is totally different. Given that almost a century has passed between the scenarios of the two films, it could be said that this is not surprising. However, the point lies not in what the passing of that time-span has done to the men of Texas, but rather in what the passing of the twenty-three years between the making of *Red River* and *The Last Picture Show* has done to cinema's perception of Texas manhood.

From the strong men of destiny featured in *Red River* (or *The Searchers*), we now have men whose sense of purpose is more parochial, locked as it is within the strict confines of a decaying post-capitalist small-town existence. Both McMurtry, when writing his novel, and Bogdanovich, when constructing the film, had a thematic choice. They both chose an essentially negative emphasis and this was due in no small way to the cultural and social attitudes toward Texas and its manhood that prevailed in America at the respective points of production.

Unlike Hawks' or Ford's portrayal of historical white Texas maleness, there are no enduring leaders in this society and levels of masculine power and influence are difficult to gauge. For instance, those men with whom we should associate physical strength, like Coach Popper (Bill Thurman), the high school physical instructor, or Abilene (Clu Gulager), the chief oil-field roughneck, are either lacking in key areas of their emotional or moral development or are given traits that keep them from society's mainstream: the suggestion surrounding Coach Popper, for instance, is one of latent homosexuality. The one man who is seen to wield socio-economic power, Gene Farrow (Robert Glenn), is peripheral and also dominated by his wife Lois (Ellen Burstyn). The country club society to which the Farrows belong is seen through the behaviour of the rich kids to be tawdry and confidently hedonistic. We are also made aware, through the reflections of the waitress Genevieve (Eileen Brennan), that the difference between being obscenely rich in this society and being dirt poor is one largely of chance. The one visible real father in the film, the father of Sonny Crawford (Grover Lewis), flits mysteriously into the film. Saying, 'Hi Sonny, how ya doin,' he is met with a polite, awkward pleasantry, then slips off once again into oblivion.⁸⁸ This suggests that the role of the father figure has been negated in this dying society. Like all of the central relationships in the film, this one also engenders a sense of unsustainable community. The other boys, Duane and Billy, do not have fathers, and Joe Bob Blanton, invariably described as 'the preacher's boy,' is caught with a little girl in his car on the outskirts of town, an action that denies his paternal influence.⁸⁹ If we add to this the fact that the one man whose stature promises to be a guide for the film's adolescents, Sam the Lion (Ben Johnson), dies just when the boys need him most, then we can see the difficulties in providing a source of a masculine role model through an individual character.

The key theme of the film centres on the unfulfilled promise of this section of Texas and the resultant impact on the quality of its resident manhood. In this commentary on Texas life it is, of course, men who are seen to be responsible for creating this society and for the condition of it. The film-maker's accent on the past, on the significance of what has gone before, places responsibility squarely on the performance of those men who are portrayed as being a link with the community's history. The key figure in this regard is Sam the Lion. The choice of Ben Johnson for the part holds especial cinematic symbolism. Johnson was for many years a stalwart of John Ford films, starring in such Western classics as George Stevens' *Shane* (1953), as well as Ford's *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949), *Rio Grande* (1950) and *Wagonmaster* (1950). His presence is a familiar one and serves to remind the audience of the cinema's earlier perception of Texas manhood. In the roles that Johnson played, the dominant masculine quality that he embodied was courageous integrity in the face of danger. In all of the above-mentioned films, he played men who, albeit sometimes belatedly, were motivated by a sense of righteous morality. Typical of his consistent characterisation was his role in *Shane*, where he played Chris, the hired henchman whose conscience finally demands that Shane is given the chance of a fair fight.

On a man to man basis, Sam the Lion consistently commands respect, despite the fact that he is not blessed with the traditional attributes that allow men to dominate the screen. He is not handsome, he is not young, his physical presence is not imposing, and the clothes that he wears are the antithesis of 'power dressing.' However, what the character does have is an imposing personality forged from experience. Despite this, the character of Sam the Lion is designed to represent the vulnerability of the classic cinematic powerful Texas male. Ironically, one of the factors that makes

Sam's weakness so palpable is that he dominates his screen environment. Like the previously-mentioned Homer Bannon in *Horseman, Pass By*, played by Melvyn Douglas in *Hud*, he is, as one critic put it, designed to personify 'the quiet masculine dignity, honesty and strength of the cowboy archetype – a vestigial remnant of the old West of the ranges amid the drab town of the new West.'⁹⁰ The character of Sam the Lion offers a caring quality which contrasts with the harder mythic qualities normally associated with the powerful Texas male stereotype. Essentially, Sam the Lion and Homer Bannon care more about values than they do about power. The classic Texas character was the creator and, when necessary, the saviour of society. However, too much contact with society was seen to erode the effectiveness and essential individualism of the classic Texas hero. In the case of Sam the Lion, it is this connection with his community that weakens him. Sam is helpless to prevent the decay of his home town and that fact alone signifies failure. It is Sam's inability to influence the course of society, or his unwillingness to change personally, that condemns his particular version of white Texas manhood to failure. By making Sam the dominant and most admirable male character in the movie, the film-makers are not only judging the society that destroys him, they are also questioning the durability of the standard characterisation of the Texas male.

The character of Sam contains within him the humanitarian conscience of Anarene. Despite the ambiguity of his relationship with the boys in the film, he strives manfully to maintain the one thread of decency that runs through the community. His paternal protection of the mute, Billy, is the most obvious example of this. When Sonny, Duane and their high school buddies hire a whore for Billy, he suffers the ignominy of premature ejaculation and a bloodied nose. Sam is indignant:

You boys can get on outta here, I don't wanna have no more to do with ya.

Scarin' a poor creature like Billy just so that you can have a few laughs. I've bin around that trashy behaviour all my life. I'm gettin' tired of puttin' up with it. Now you can stay outta this pool-hall, outta my cafe and my picture show too.⁹¹

Sam's punitive attack on the boys turns into a tirade against all of the crass male behaviour that he has experienced in his life. What is, in essence, a stupid adolescent prank, stemming from the kind of boredom that small-town life engenders, comes to symbolise all the weaknesses of Texas manhood as Sam sees them. When Billy is killed by a truck, we are offered a comparison between the kind of humanity offered by Sam and that of the run-of-the-mill Texan in the movie. The reaction of the ordinary townsmen to the broken lifeless body of the boy is matter of fact and heartless – the antithesis to the way Sam reacted when Billy was humiliated. This cold-blooded behaviour is a graphic manifestation of the essential inhumanity of modern-day Texas and what Sam has felt obliged to distance himself from.

The perception of white Texas masculinity in *The Last Picture Show* was of a manhood sorely affected by two factors. The first was how it had been previously portrayed in cinema and the second related to the contemporary socio-economic and cultural reality of the state. The popular view of Texas in the period following the Kennedy assassination, the Johnson Presidency and the Whitman killings did not lend itself to a contentedly optimistic or neutral approach. Film-makers such as Bogdanovich, Schlesinger and Penn, and writers such as Mailer, Herlihy and Shrake, irrespective of any aesthetic deliberations, created a profoundly flawed vision of

Texas and its manhood. This construction itself owed much to the negativity which surrounded the image of the state in the mid-1960s.

¹ William Manchester, *The Death of a President* (London: World Books, 1967), p. 65.

² See, for example, the articles in the following national publications: 'May God Forgive Dallas,' *Newsweek*, 9 December 1963; 'The Shame of Dallas,' *Saturday Review*, 28 December 1963; 'Police in Dallas,' *The New Republic*, 18 January 1964; 'What Kind of Place is Dallas?' *Life*, 31 January 1964; 'Dallas is in Exile,' *Esquire*, June 1968.

³ Haley, *A Texan Looks at Lyndon*, p. 205.

⁴ See *The Dan Smoot Report*, 9 December 1963; Bruce Alger, 'Setting the Record Straight on Dallas,' *Congressional Record*, 27 April 1964, pp. 8916-35; Martin Dies, 'Assassination and its Aftermath,' *American Opinion*, Volume VII, No. 3, (March 1964), pp. 1-10. The official report carried out by Waggoner Carr, the Attorney General of Texas, contained the following: 'Oswald . . . was an enemy of the political philosophy of Texas. The evidence clearly refutes the early insinuations emanating in some quarters that that the political philosophy of Dallas was responsible for this tragedy.' *Texas Supplemental Report on the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy and John B. Connally* November 22 1963, 5 October 1964.

⁵ See, for example, 'How Could it Happen?' *The New Republic*, 7 December 1963. The following is an extract: 'For two days the Dallas police had in custody both the young man without friends, and the nation's good name. Whether by design or ineptitude, they failed to measure up.'

⁶ *Austin American-Statesman*, 20 March 1964.

⁷ *Dallas Morning News*, 5 April 1964.

⁸ See Robert B. Fairbanks, 'The Assassination and Dallas Politics: Changes to Continuity,' *Legacies: The History Journal for Dallas and North Central Texas* (Fall 1998).

⁹ *Daily Texan*, 24 November 1963.

¹⁰ Ronnie Dugger, *The Politician: The Life and Times of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), p.140. Dugger also tells of how Johnson created Texas-shaped steaks to serve to his guests at the LBJ Ranch.

¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 140-45.

¹² *El Paso Labor Advocate*, 29 November 1963.

¹³ *Dallas Morning News*, 28 April 1964.

¹⁴ *Fredericksburg Radio Post*, 2 January 1964. Johnson also outfitted his White House staff in casual Western ranch suits. See conversation with Irving Frank, Clothier of San Antonio, Texas, in Michael R. Beschloss, ed., *Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), pp. 143-44.

¹⁵ 'Lyndon Johnson: the Last Frontier President,' *Journal of the West*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (April 1995), p. 74.

¹⁶ *New York Times*, 12 January 1964. The same newspaper ran the same theme on the previous week. See, 'With Johnson on the Ranch: The President, Observed at Home, Reveals Image of a Westerner,' *New York Times*, 5 January 1964.

¹⁷ Dugger, *The Politician*, p. 33.

¹⁸ Haley, *A Texan Looks at Lyndon*, p. 73.

¹⁹ *Dallas Morning News*, 26 November 1963.

²⁰ *Dallas Morning News*, 8 December 1963.

²¹ Manchester, *Death of a President*, p. 70.

²² *Dallas Morning News*, 24 November 1963.

²³ *Dallas Morning News*, 4 January 1964.

²⁴ *The Texas Observer*, 7 February 1964.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *The Texas Observer*, 1 May 1964.

²⁷ *The Texas Observer*, 6 March 1964.

²⁸ James Ellroy, *The Cold Six Thousand* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), p. 51.

²⁹ Warren Leslie, *Dallas Public and Private* (New York: Grossman, 1964), p. 105.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 9.

³¹ *Dallas Times-Herald*, 12 April 1964.

³² *Dallas Morning News*, 12 April 1964.

³³ Leslie, *Dallas Public and Private*, p. 228.

³⁴ James Leo Herlihy, *Midnight Cowboy* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2002, first published 1965), pp. 99-100.

³⁵ Dialogue and details of the film *Midnight Cowboy* are taken from <http://www.simplyscripts.com>.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Norman Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1977, first published 1948), p. 122.

³⁹ Norman Mailer, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* (New York: Picador, 2000, first published 1967), p. 145.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 34.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 14.

⁴² Ibid, p. 19.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 73.

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- ⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 12.
- ⁴⁵ Edwin Shrake, *Strange Peaches* (New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1972), p. 4.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 260.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 264.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 265.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 266.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 275.
- ⁵¹ Peter Gent, *North Dallas Forty* (London: Michael Joseph, 1973), p. 9.
- ⁵² *The Daily Texan*, 27 July 1979.
- ⁵³ Gent, *North Dallas Forty*, p. 70.
- ⁵⁴ *The Texas Observer*, 19 August 1966.
- ⁵⁵ For an indication of how the Whitman incident influenced Bogdanovich, see Thomas J. Harris, *Bogdanovich's Picture Shows* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1990), p. 38 and Andrew Yule, *Picture Shows: The Life and Times of Peter Bogdanovich* (New York: Limelight, 1992), p. 29.
- ⁵⁶ For an explanation of the changes to the screenplay of *Dr Strangelove*, see Don Graham, *Cowboys and Cadillacs*, p. 74.
- ⁵⁷ The 'New Wave' was a movement in French cinema beginning in the late 1950s and peaking by 1962 that sought innovation in subject matter and technique. The key figures in the movement were Francois Truffaut, Claude Chabrol and Jean-Luc Godard.
- ⁵⁸ Matthew Bernstein, 'Perfecting the New Gangster: Writing the Script for the 1967 film, *Bonnie and Clyde*,' *Film Quarterly* (Summer, 2000).
- ⁵⁹ Peter Biskind, *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), p. 26.
- ⁶⁰ Dialogue and details from *Bonnie and Clyde* are taken from, <http://www.simplyscripts.com>. This source will subsequently be referred to as, *Bonnie and Clyde*, simply scripts. The AAA (the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933) was a key plank of President Roosevelt's 'New Deal' policies.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² Ibid.
- ⁶³ Ibid.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid.
- ⁶⁵ The petition read, in part, 'Capt Frank Hamer is identified as an inept pursuer of the desperadoes . . . in a wholly fictitious and unwarranted portrayal, and finally as their vindictive killer from ambush.' *Houston Post*, 6 January 1968. The suit was settled in 1971 for an undisclosed sum.
- ⁶⁶ *Bonnie and Clyde*, simply scripts.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid.

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- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid.
- ⁷¹ Lester D. Friedman, *Bonnie and Clyde* (London: BFI Publishing, 2000), p. 18.
- ⁷² *Houston Post*, 17 September 1967.
- ⁷³ *San Antonio Express*, 16 September 1967.
- ⁷⁴ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 21 September 1967.
- ⁷⁵ *Houston Post*, 17 September 1967.
- ⁷⁶ *Austin American-Statesman*, 23 September 1967.
- ⁷⁷ *San Antonio Express*, 16 September 1967.
- ⁷⁸ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 15 September 1967.
- ⁷⁹ *Dallas Morning News*, 14 September 1967.
- ⁸⁰ Harris, *Bogdanovich's Picture Shows*, p. 47.
- ⁸¹ Larry McMurtry, *Film Flam: Essays on Hollywood* (New York: Touchstone Press, 1987), p. 33.
- ⁸² Harris, *Bogdanovich's Picture Shows*, p. 79.
- ⁸³ *The Houston Post*, 17 February 1972.
- ⁸⁴ *Scenario*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Winter 1998/9).
- ⁸⁵ Yule, *Picture Shows*, p. 37.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 43.
- ⁸⁷ Larry McMurtry, *The Last Picture Show*, p. 265.
- ⁸⁸ Dialogue from the film, *The Last Picture Show* is taken from the video of the film by Video Collection International Ltd (1992).
- ⁸⁹ Ibid.
- ⁹⁰ C. D. Peavey, *Larry McMurtry* (Boston: Twayne, 1977), p. 118.
- ⁹¹ *The Last Picture Show*, video.

Conclusion

The Continued Vilification of White Texas Manhood

In July 2004, the magazine *Texas Monthly* (a publication which delights in regurgitating the notion of the Texas male myth) featured on its cover the Texas humorist/writer/musician Kinky Friedman dressed as the Queen, smoking a cigar and raising a finger to the world. This picture was placed under the questioning headline ‘Texas vs. The World! · Yes, they hate us. Should we care?’¹ The article which accompanied the headline acknowledged the negativity of the foreign view of the Texas image and used it as an exemplar of what was wrong with the image of America in a time of war. This article is evidence that, in the first few years of the twenty-first century, Texas cultural commentators, like those in the heyday of Ronnie Dugger, Lon Tinkle and John Rosenfield, were still consumed by the need for self-examination. Further evidence of this is found in the fact that Michael R. Levy, the man behind the *Texas Monthly*, tried in the 1980s to launch a Californian version of his magazine. The failure of this venture, according to Levy, was that ‘Californians apparently have individual lifestyles, not a single mind-set.’² The article also confirmed that the idea that, as John Bainbridge wrote in 1961, ‘the epitome of America is Texas’ is as fresh in the minds of some writers as it was to their predecessors forty years earlier.³

Twenty years previously, the set-in-Texas-film *Blood Simple* (1984) opened with the following lines over a visually bleak, contemporary industrial Texas landscape:

Go ahead complain, take your problems to your neighbour ask for help and watch him fly. Now, in Russia they got it mapped out so that everyone pulls for

everyone else, that's the theory anyway. What I know about is Texas and down here you're on your own.⁴

Spoken in a slow Texas drawl by seedy private detective Loren Visser (M. Emmett Walsh), the narrative conveys a sense of the politically-motivated and brutal individualism which had come to epitomise the image of white Texas maleness in American cinema. Texas in this context is depicted as seedy and corrupt, a place where no one can be trusted and everyone is up to no good.

Another example of the overwhelming negativity which continues to surround the Texas male image is found in Ridley Scott's film *Thelma and Louise* (1991), which used the idea of Texas and its manhood as the epitome of brutal and aggressive male violence against women. Louise (Susan Sarandon), it is suggested, was raped in Texas and, although the state itself did not physically feature in the film, it was assumed by the film-maker that a contemporary audience would understand that the culture of the men of Texas made them more than capable of such an abuse.

Both *Thelma and Louise* and *Blood Simple* continued the trend in American cinema toward the demonisation of white Texas maleness. In the 1970s and 80s, films such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), *Sugarland Express* (1974), *Race with the Devil* (1975), *A Small Town in Texas* (1976), *Raggedy Man* (1981), *The Border* (1981) or *Paris, Texas* (1984) all offered, at the very least, an overtly pessimistic or, at times, fear-provoking image of contemporary white Texas manhood. Even films that set out to offer a more sympathetic perspective on Texas maleness such as *Urban Cowboy* (1979), *Places in the Heart* (1984) and *Tender Mercies* (1985) could not avoid the inclusion of troublesome, deep-seated, Texas-specific socio-economic or racial problems.

The continued negative judgement of the white Texas male was not confined to cinema. The television series *Dallas* (1976-1991), which featured the powerful and villainous J. R. Ewing, a character who still no doubt remains for many the epitome of Texas manhood, further encouraged the idea that Texas and its men were capable of almost anything. So widely did *Dallas* spread the debate on the negativity of the white Texas male image that in 1983 the then French Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, dramatically proclaimed the series a 'symbol of American cultural imperialism.'⁵ It was not simply the massive popularity of the series in France which worried the socialist Lang; it was also the casual imposition on French culture of the glorification of the most extreme form of American capitalism and political conservatism which, of course, as the series suggested, has its natural home in Texas. Naturally, this extreme characterisation of American capitalism was personified by a white Texas male.

Other television characterisations of white Texas maleness also thrive on the assumption that the concept is basic to American conservatism. The television cartoon series *King of the Hill* (1996-2004) features a family from the fictional Texas town of Arlen and has characters such as Cotton Hill, who describes himself as a retired war hero and whose favourite pastime is 'stopping by the Wax Museum to give FDR the finger.' Another character, the conspiracy-nut Dale Gribble, is fond of quoting the right-wing, gun-lobby mantra: 'guns don't kill people. The government does.'⁶

Not every use of the idea of white Texas manhood in popular culture, however, has been designed to accentuate the failings of Texas society and masculinity. For example, the film-maker John Sayles, influenced from childhood by stories of the Alamo and its male heroes and motivated by the series of contradictions which, he believed, made up the popular image of the white Texas male, made the intensely

political film *Lone Star* (1995).⁷ Sayles was also motivated by his belief in multiculturalism and was inspired by the mix of human relationships and people he had met along the Texas-Mexican border 'with their complicated alliances and classes of self-identification.'⁸ His task in making *Lone Star*, therefore, was to uncover the 'layers of complexity and interdependence' which cut through any notion of the supremacy of white Texans.⁹ The hero of the film is an untypical white Texas male, Sam Deeds (Chris Cooper). Deeds represents, in his societal role as sheriff, a direct line between what Sayles saw as the corruption of the past and also the problems of white men in a society in which they no longer have political control. The final line in Sayles' film is: 'Everything that went before, all that stuff, that history – the hell with it, right? Forget the Alamo.'¹⁰ *Lone Star*, therefore, employed the standard image of white Texas masculinity, with all of its negative racial and historical baggage, to promote the film-maker's concept of a socio-political ideal based on racial harmony.

Sayles' film attempted to turn the idea of white Texas maleness around so that the basic strength of the male icon could be used to carry a liberal, racially-inclusive political message in line with the film-maker's own beliefs. Richard Linklater's film *Slacker* (1991) similarly used a specifically Texas setting to explore an entirely different species of Texan. In this instance, the focus fell on the inactive, over-educated world of the anti-yuppie, anarchic sub-culture of deadbeats found in the Texas state capitol, Austin. As well as the setting, the regular references to the Kennedy assassination and the Charles Whitman shootings give the film an overtly Texas feel. Within this cinematic Texas context, the characters eschew any contact with mainstream society and offer a form of self-centred rebellion that is founded on any number of conspiracy theories. The slacker is, of course, a worldwide

phenomenon. However, the Texas context of Linklater's film encourages a cinema audience, armed with a lifetime of preconceived notions about the status of white Texas manhood, to see the film as a commentary on the decay of Texas maleness.

All of these examples illustrate the power of popular culture to determine how a specific group of people – in this instance, Texas men – are perceived. They also provide evidence that, beyond the chronological remit of this thesis, the character of white Texas manhood continues to be a lasting, politically-relevant feature of American popular culture.

The Political Construction of the Image of White Texas Masculinity

As it is hoped this thesis has shown, the negative view of white Texas manhood was the product of a long process of interpreting and reinterpreting that male image within the wider American culture. Each chapter of this thesis has discussed an important aspect of the construction and later deconstruction of this image. The first chapter covered the period surrounding the Texas Centennial, when Webb, Haley and Dobie constructed a powerful image of white Texas maleness which, they believed, would transcend a series of historical negatives and socio-economic realities and propel the state into its second century. The freshly reconstructed myths that were fashioned from the rubble of the old served to confirm the natural place of white Texas maleness at the apex of Texas society. The iconographic status of white Texas maleness provided a useful ideological tool with which white Texas society imposed its rule over other ethnic groups in the state. By the 1940s, Webb and Dobie had changed sufficiently to have become part of a group of politically-liberal Texans who feared for the image of Texas and warned of the corrosive influence of the far right.

Their erstwhile colleague Haley, however, continued to revel in the construction of a version of the white Texas male that reflected his lifelong belief and commitment to libertarian conservatism.

Chapter two discusses the Thirties fiction of Nelson Algren and Edward Anderson. In each case, their work was profoundly influenced by political extremism – Algren’s communist sympathies and Anderson’s proto-fascist beliefs. The corrupt, violent, pathetic and powerless male Texas characters they created were graphically designed to illustrate where, in their estimation, the white, business-driven, male-dominated society of Texas had gone wrong. White Texas masculinity was, therefore, a conduit through which they could express their political views. The profile accorded to powerless white Texans in their work was high. It was, however, often so wrapped up in political point-scoring that it failed to engage with the issues surrounding the realities of life for those on the poor edges of Texas society. The extremes of political image-making in their work meant that powerless white Texas males continued to have no durable literature-based cultural symbol which would allow them to establish and maintain a strong and enduring cultural identity.¹¹

Chapter three argues that the state’s conservative press, funded and supported by the Texas ruling elite, from their campaigns against the desperado in the 1930s to their support for sundry extremist causes in the 1950s and early 60s, and their agenda for promoting Texas culture, irrespective of its value, had a significant bearing on how white Texas manhood was perceived. Also, as discussed in chapter four, the growing awareness of the state’s liberal press that the image of the state’s men and right-wing politics were becoming synonymous with each other launched a long-running alternative effort accurately to define the meaning of manhood in Texas.

Chapter five has demonstrated how the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the Presidency of Lyndon Johnson brought Texas to the forefront of American politics and culture. The subsequent denigration of the state in film and literature was founded on the strong belief among many Americans that Texas had become, as one Texas academic put it, 'Paranoia City.'¹² The catastrophic impact on the Texas masculine image following Kennedy's assassination and the controversy of Johnson's Presidency had an immediate and profound impact on Texas writers and journalists.

Men and Texas

Men, and the male image, have always dominated both the political and the cultural character of Texas. Despite, for instance, an impressive array of Texas-born female Hollywood stars, nothing in the popular culture that dealt with Texas even remotely threatened to break the mould of masculine discourse.¹³ One Texas-born female academic has written: 'If you knew Texas only through its best known writing you would be hard pressed to believe that competent, adult, self-defining women exist here.'¹⁴ The 1990 Texas governor's race between Ann Richards and Clayton Williams, while resulting in victory for the liberal Democrat Richards, was a good example of the arrogance of Texas men in their assumption, misplaced in this case, that they had a natural right to assume control over the political process. Part of Richards' winning strategy was to employ an image that would compete with her male opponents West Texas 'ranch foreman' persona. Richards encouraged the 'frontierswoman' façade which emphasised her gender, her toughness and her oneness with the historical culture of the state.¹⁵ Don Graham wrote of Richards that she 'cultivated the macho image by going dove-hunting . . . She also cultivated macho

rhetoric drawing upon ranching metaphors saying, for example, that someone was “all hat and no cattle”.¹⁶ Therefore, by playing the same image game as her conservative male opponent, Richards was not only able to win this particular election, she also succeeded, uniquely, in appropriating the normally conservative and male image of the state for the political benefit of a liberal woman.

Richards – as with Coke Stevenson in the 1940s and Lyndon Baines Johnson in the 1960s – understood that the overtly masculine image of Texas could offer many positive aspects to a politician’s image. Johnson used the image to escape from the parochialism of his Texas Hill Country background. He did this because he understood that Americans saw in the honest, individualistic and dignified rancher persona something that was profoundly theirs and could belong to no other race of people. This image of rural America could also be used to foster social cohesion for the American nation at a time – in the aftermath of the Kennedy assassination – when notions of foreign aggression, home-based political discord and urban chaos threatened to tear the country apart.

The Wider Significance of White Texas Manhood

There is a relevance to the concept of white Texas maleness beyond the confines of Texas culture and society. The historical dominance of the white male icon in Texas society was to a large degree caused by the fact that Texas was an intellectual wasteland. Local writers and historians, blunted by the paucity of their own vision and encumbered with the weight of history and a desire to defend the dominant image of maleness in the state from intrusion from racial ‘others’, struggled to escape from the debilitating impact of such a powerful and narrow cultural identity. Those who

kept faith with a mythological vision of Texas and who, in the process, ignored the harsher socio-economic and racial realities of life in the state also avoided meaningful discourse with the intellectual ideas and concepts that were driving the world outside of the state of Texas. Parochialism of this kind not only held Texas back in terms of the development of a creditable, intellectually-challenging aesthetic output, it was also a hindrance in terms of its failure to address the barren landscape of political discourse in the state.

The lessons that can be taken from the political deployment of the cultural image of white Texas manhood, especially in relation to the control of Texas society by a cultural and socio-economic elite, are clear. Myth can be used to underpin the control of dominant ruling groups in society. The mythology surrounding white Texas maleness has undoubtedly been used to bolster the image of the state of Texas over a long period and has, therefore, been a contributory factor in the continued dominance of politicians who are happy to walk in its shadow.

The process of demythologising any cultural myth is difficult. Thinkers such as Noam Chomsky, Kalle Lasn or George Monbiot have sought in their work to challenge the premise of many of the common myths of American and Western society.¹⁷ The film-maker Michael Moore, in his film *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), used a mix of humour and carefully-selected facts to undermine a range of American cultural myths. These include common assumptions that, for instance, murderous violence among young Americans is caused by aggressive music, video games, or youth alienation. Moore also challenged the myth surrounding the propensity of black men for violence. It could be argued that TV shows such as *Dallas* and *King of the Hill*, or films such as *Blood Simple*, by their use of parody – evident in their attachment to an over-emphasis on the extremes of the white Texas male character –

contribute to a demythologising of the Texas male image. However, even obvious attempts to undermine the Texas myth and the image of the state's white men through satire, in films such as *Dr Strangelove* (1963) or *Viva Max!* (1969), in which a tin-pot Mexican general, played by Peter Ustinov, marches into Texas and re-takes the Alamo, have not prevented the myth evolving and strengthening into an image deemed essential by the first twenty first-century American president.

There still exists in Texas the kind of pride in the state which often overflows into hyperbole. The antidote to denigration continues to be Texas nationalism in all of its forms. A blunt example of this can be found in champion cyclist Lance Armstrong's statement: 'I want to die a hundred years old with an American flag on my back and the Star of Texas on my helmet.'¹⁸ Texas academics have also followed in the footsteps of such figures as Dobie, Haley and Webb in their use of overstatement to describe the state and its masculine culture. Don Graham, in his 1989 biography of Audie Murphy, wrote of his perception of the masculine status of the late war hero and film star compared to a contemporary non-Texan example of screen machismo. 'Audie Murphy,' Graham insisted, 'could have had Sylvester Stallone for breakfast. Audie Murphy was the real thing, not some pumped-up, aerobicized celluloid palooka.'¹⁹ Graham was promoting the memory of Audie Murphy in the same way that Webb promoted the manliness of Frank Hamer, or Dobie eulogised John D. Young. There remains in the world of Texas academia, therefore, a tendency to embroider the potency of the state's manhood.

Of course, as the theatrical, politicised, macho demeanour of George W. Bush demonstrates, the image of white Texas men is most often used to promote a conservative viewpoint. It seems inevitable that Bush will keep this version of white Texas maleness at the forefront of the world's consciousness for the foreseeable

future. The recent furore which accompanied the release of John Lee Hancock's *The Alamo* (2004) indicates that the political right in America still jealously guards the image of Texas and its heroes. A spokesman for the right-wing Freedom Alliance stated of the less-than-heroic portrayal of Davy Crockett in the film: 'The movie reads more like a Disney fairy tale and promotes a politically correct revisionist agenda aimed at destroying a traditional American hero.'²⁰ In the early 1960s, John Steinbeck told of the series of myths that tie Texans to their home state. He wrote: 'There is no question that this Texas-of-the-mind fable is often synthetic, sometimes untruthful, and frequently romantic, but that in no way diminishes its strength as a symbol.'²¹ The strength that Steinbeck identified provided more to some in Texas than a comfortable and parochial sense of identity. It was also – at that time in Texas history – thought to provide a safe and secure home for the expression and implementation of conservative political sentiment. One Texas historian has written that the state 'clings to its frontier heritage, viewing it in heroic terms, fearful that should the past be lost, with its courage and risk taking lifted to epic proportions, so will the state's uniqueness.'²² However, the standard macho image of Texas offers more than simple reassurance for those in Texas concerned with a loss of identity. It has also come to be the personification of the powerful in the state. As the Freedom Alliance statement indicates, the image of white Texas, and the men who most commonly represent it, remains a potent symbol for the American right. This knowledge makes the study of the construction of the image of white Texas masculinity and the consequences of its impact of considerable relevance to the modern world.

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- ¹ Mimi Swartz, 'Them's Fightin' Words,' *Texas Monthly* (July 2004).
- ² Tom Pilkington, *State of Mind*, p. xi.
- ³ Bainbridge, *The Super-Americans*, p. 6.
- ⁴ Joel and Ethan Coen, *Blood Simple and Raising Arizona* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988).
- ⁵ Ien Ang, *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 2.
- ⁶ *King of the Hill*, Fox Broadcasting Company, 1996-2004.
- ⁷ Sayles was struck in particular by the key contradiction of the Alamo: that men should fight for freedom in order that they could keep other men as slaves. John Sayles, *Men with Guns & Lone Star* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p. ix.
- ⁸ Ibid, p. ix.
- ⁹ Ibid, p. ix.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, p. 244.
- ¹¹ A strong image of those white Texas males without power did exist and has lasted in Texas and American culture to this day. However, its source is not film or literature but music. See, for example, Duncan McLean, *Lone Star Swing* (London: Vintage, 1997); Charles R. Townsend, *San Antonio Rose: The Life and Music of Bob Wills* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).
- ¹² Don Graham, *Cowboys and Cadillacs*, p. 72.
- ¹³ This list includes Joan Crawford, Jayne Mansfield, Sissy Spacek, Renee Zellwegger, Cyd Charisse, Anne Sheridan, Carol Burnett, Ann Miller and Linda Darnell.
- ¹⁴ Celia Morris, 'Requiem for a Texas Lady,' in Craig Clifford and Tom Pilkington eds., *Range Wars: Heated Debates, Sober Reflections, and Other Assessments of Texas Writing* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1989), p. 91.
- ¹⁵ Sue Tolleson-Rhinehart and Jeannie R. Stanley, *Claytie and the Lady: Ann Richards, Gender, and Politics in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), p. 71.
- ¹⁶ E-mail correspondence with author, dated 30 March 2004.
- ¹⁷ See for instance, Kalle Lasn, *Culture Jam: The Uncooling of America* (New York: William Morrow, 1999); George Monbiot, *The Age of Consent: A Manifesto for a New World Order* (London: Flamingo, 2003); Noam Chomsky, *Media Control: the Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1997).
- ¹⁸ Lance Armstrong, *It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life* (New York: Putman, 2000), p. 1
- ¹⁹ Don Graham, *No Name on the Bullet: A Biography of Audie Murphy* (New York: Viking, 1989), p. xi.
- ²⁰ Freedom Alliance press release, 2 April 2004, <http://www.freedomalliance.org>. The Freedom Alliance was founded in 1990 by Oliver North, who is now the honorary chairman of the organisation.
- ²¹ John Steinbeck, *Travels With Charley: In Search of America* (London: Heineman, 1962), p. 202.

²² Ronald L. Davis, 'Modernization and Distinctiveness: Twentieth Century Cultural Life in Texas,' in Walter L. Buenger and Robert A. Calvert, eds., *Texas Through Time*, p. 4.

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